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The works of the late Rev.
Stephen Charnock

THE

WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

IN

NINE VOLUMES.

WITH A

PREFATORY DEDICATION AND MEMOIR

BY

EDWARD PARSONS.

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THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

1 *John* 2. 1.

MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS I WRITE UNTO YOU, THAT YE SIN NOT; IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.

PART I.

EXPOSITION AND OBSERVATIONS.

The design of the text—An antidote against presumption—Despair—Import of the text—Why Christ is termed the Righteous—Paraphrase—A description of Christ in heaven—Observations drawn from hence—The doctrine gives no liberty to sin—Believers liable to sin—Should not despair of pardon—Must exercise faith as often as they sin—Jesus an advocate only for them—The proper design of the office—No man justified by his own works—Can set up no pleas of his own—Christ distinct from the Father—The glory of the gospel.

THE apostle having in the latter verses of the former chapter spoken of the extensiveness of pardon, ver. 7, 9, subjoins ver. 8, 10, that yet the reliques of sin do remain in God's people. But though all sin

that was pardoned, was pardoned upon the account of the blood of Christ, which had a property to cleanse from all sin, and that confession of sin was a means to attain this forgiveness purchased by our Saviour's blood; yet, men might drink in the poisonous doctrine of licentiousness, believing that upon their confession they should presently have forgiveness, though they walked on in the ways of their own hearts: and on the other side, many good men might be dejected at the consideration of the reliques of sin in them, which the apostle asserts, 1 *John* 1. 8, 10, that no man was free from in this life. In this verse therefore the apostle prevents those two mistakes which men might infer from the former doctrine, that we may not presume by the news of grace, nor despond by a reflection on our sin.

I. *Presumption* on the one hand, in these words, *My little children, these things write I unto you that you sin not:* though I have told you that forgiveness of sin is to be had upon confession, yet the intent of my writing is not to encourage a voluntary commission.

II. *Dejection* and *despair*, in those words, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father:* If you do commit sin, you must not be so much cast down, as if the door of mercy were shut against you; no, there is an agent above to keep it open for every one that repents and believes. Here then the apostle treats of the remedy God had provided for the sins of believers; viz. the advocacy of Christ, who, having laid the foundation of our redemption in the satisfaction made to God by his blood, resides in heaven as an advocate to plead it on our behalf. This says one, * is the sum and scope of the whole gospel; he that believes this, can never despair; he that believes it not, is ignorant of Christ, though he hath the whole doctrine of the gospel in his memory. The

* Ferus in loc.

word Παράκλητος signifies an *advocate*, *comforter*, or *exhorter;* it is only, in this place, used of Christ, but of the Spirit it is used, *John* 14. 16, *John* 16. 7, and in both places rendered *comforter*. And παράκλησις, a word of affinity to this from the same root, is rendered *exhortation*, 1 *Thes.* 2. 3. * Some tell us that because the advocates among the Romans and Greeks were the most eloquent orators, therefore the Jews commonly called the most eminent doctors among them Paracletes. † The word is used by the Jews, who derived it from the Greeks, for one that intercedes with a prince, either to introduce, or restore a person to his favour. The Syriac uses the same word פרקלוטא derived from the Greek word, though it seems to have some affinity with the word פרק which signifies to redeem or deliver. The word is used to express an advocate by another author, ‡ where he tells us, that it is necessary for him that would be consecrated to the Father of the world, to make use of his Son, the most perfect advocate, both for the remission of our sins and the communication of happiness to us; where the word παράκλητος cannot be taken for a comforter, but an advocate, or solicitor; because the son of God procures the not remembering of sins, as well as the supplying of us with all good. § And the same author in another place ascribes the purging of sin to the λόγος θεὸς, a term whereby Christ is signified in scripture. The same word which, when serving to express the Holy Ghost, is translated comforter, is here, when used of Christ, translated advocate.

The Spirit is a persuasive advocate for God among men, as Christ is an eloquent advocate by the rhetoric of his wounds with God for men. Christ is both an advocate and a comforter; he owns himself a comforter, as well as the Spirit, *I will pray the Father*,

* Mede fragment. sacra. p. 104. † Camero. p. 179. ‡ Philo Judæ. vita Mosis
§ Critica p. 158. Christus λόγος.

and he shall give you another comforter, *John* 14. 16; implying that he was a comforter as well as the Spirit: he is a *comforter* of man in the name of God, and *advocate* with God in the behalf of man.

Let us consider the words distinctly; *We*, we apostles, we believers.

1. Not only we *apostles*. The intercession of Christ is not so narrowed; he sits not in heaven only to plead the cause of twelve men; he does indeed manage their concern; and if they which are specially commissioned by him, and are to judge the world, need him in this relation, much more do others.

2. But we *believers*; it is the same *we* he speaks of in the first chapter; we that have our sins pardoned, we that have fellowship with God, we, as distinguished from all the world, *Who is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*, ver. 2: where the *we* that have an interest in this advocate, are differenced from the world; his propitiation belongs in some sort to the world, his intercession to his church; to those that are children new begotten by the spirit. Upon the cross as a man he prayed for his murderers, but in his mediatory prayer, he prays *not for the world*, but those given him out of it, *John* 17. 9.

3. We in *particular*. Every one who hath the like precious faith, hath the like powerful advocate; he means the children he writes to, and every one of them. It had not been any preservative against dejection, had not this advocate belonged to them, and every one of them. *If any man sin*, let him be what he will, rich, or poor, high or low, one as well as another belongs to this advocate; every believer is his client; he makes intercession for them *that come unto God by him*, *Heb.* 7. 25; and therefore for every one of those comers.

We *have* not had, as if it were only a thing past, nor *shall have*, as if it were a thing to come, and ex-

pected, but *have* ἔχομεν in the present tense, which notes duration and a continued act. We have an advocate, i. e. we constantly have; we have him as long as his life endures. And another apostle tells us *he ever lives to make intercession.* He is at present an advocate, always an advocate; and in particular, for every one that comes to God by him; and for every one of them, he is an advocate as long as he lives, which is for ever; we have him not to seek, but we have him this instant in the court with the Judge before the tribunal where we are to be tried.

An advocate. It is a metaphor taken from the Romans and Greeks. * The proper office of an advocate is to defend the innocency of an accused person against his adversary: in that notion doth the apostle take it here, he mentions Christ as an advocate in the cause of sin, which is a charge of the law. An advocate stands in opposition to an accuser, and his work is in opposition to the charge of the accuser: Satan is the accuser, sin the charge. Christ stands by to answer the accusation, and wipe off the charge, by way of plea, as the office of an advocate is to do.

Advocate. It is not *advocates.* It seems John was ignorant of the intercession of saints and angels; this was a doctrine unknown in the primitive time; John knew but one, but the Romanists have made a new discovery of many more, multitudes of saints and angels, in this office for them, and they never canonize a saint, but they give him his commission for an advocate, as if they mistrusted themselves since their apostacy, or feared the affection or the skill of him the primitive christians trusted their cause to. It had been as easy a matter for the apostle to have wrote advocates, as advocate; it had been but the change of a letter or two, and the cause had been carried.

* Tertullian Apolog. cap. 2. p. 23.

This apostle, to whose care Christ bequeathed his mother when he was upon the cross, would not have waved her right, had there been a just claim for her. We find them urging the distinction of mediators of redemption, and mediators of intercession; they acknowledge the sole honour of the first to belong to Christ, but unite colleagues with him in the second.

The Holy Ghost here nulls any title but his to either, since the same person who is called our *advocate* in the text, is called *our propitiation* in the next verse; as there is but one Redeemer, so there is but one Intercessor; and the right of his intercessory power flows from the sufficiency of his propitiatory passion. The intercession of this one advocate, Jesus Christ, brought all the glorified saints to heaven; and he can by the same office secure every believer to the end of the world, without needing the interposition of any that he hath introduced before them. He is not yet tired in his office, nor are the multitudes of his clients too numerous for his memory to carry, so that he should need to turn any of them over to weaker heads.

With the Father. As the first person in order, and the conservator of the rights of the Deity; not only with God, where God is, but with God as the object of his intercession, and with God as a Father. *With the Father.*

(1.) Not with an *enemy.* Little hopes then that he should succeed in his suit. An enemy may lay aside his anger, and he may retain it; the pressing an enemy with importunities many times makes his fury seven times hotter. But it is with the Father, one reconciled to us by the price of the Redeemer's blood. No, nor with a *Judge*, a term as affrighting, as that of a Father is refreshing. Thus Christ phrased it before his departure, *I will pray the Father*, *John* 14. 16, not I will pray the Judge, the apostle puts it in the same term Christ had done before him.

(2.) It is not said with *his* Father. It is no mean

advantage for the Son of an offended prince, to espouse the suit of a rebel; the affection of the Father might encourage the solicitation of the Son; but this had not been a sufficient cordial; the relation of a Son might make him acceptable to his Father for himself, but not for the criminal: Christ might have been dear to God in the place of a Son, but we might have still been hateful to him upon the account of our rebellions.

(3.) Nor is it said, with *your* Father. Had God been only our Father, and an angry Father, and standing in no such relation to the advocate, we might have had reason to hang the wing; the title of a father is often without the affections of a Father.

(4.) But with *the* Father, a Father both to the advocate and client; to the advocate, by an unspeakable generation; to the client, by an evangelical creation, a Father in all respects, not only by general creation, but special adoption and spiritual regeneration: one of paternal tenderness as well as title, and possessing the compassions, as well as the relation of a Father. The Father respects both: as Christ ascended to God as *his Father and our Father*, *John* 20. 17, so he intercedes with him as standing in such a capacity both to him and us. Christ treats not with him as a Judge only, but as a Father; as a Judge, God's justice was satisfied by the death of Christ, but the end of his advocacy is upon the account of this satisfaction to excite the paternal love of God towards his people. The object of the oblation was God as a Judge or Governor; the object of intercession is God as a Father; an advocate with the Father; the first was a payment to justice, and the other is a solicitation of mercy. This title of Father assures us of the success of his intercession.

Jesus Christ the righteous. Now he specifies this advocate together with his necessary qualification. The words righteous and righteousness, both in the Hebrew and Greek, are sometimes taken for mercy

and charitableness ;* the words following may favour the interpretation of righteous in this sense, for it was the compassion of Christ that moved him to be our propitiation, and his charitable temper is not diminished by the things that he suffered; but I would rather take δικαιος in the proper sense for just. Mercy without righteousness in the world is but a foolish pity, and may support a world of unrighteousness. The honesty and righteousness of an advocate upon earth, is of more value and efficacy for his client with a just judge, than all his compassion. In this sense of holy or righteous, Peter uses the word, *You have denied the Holy One, and the just*, *Acts* 3. 14, where just is opposite to an unrighteous murderer, and *Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 18, where the righteousness of the surety is opposed to the unrighteousness of the criminal for whom he suffered. This is the comfort, that he is as righteous for an advocate, as the Father is for a judge, that he is as holy, as we are unholy, our sin rendered us hateful, but the righteousness of the advocate renders him such as it *became* him to be for us, whose advocate he is, *Heb.* 7. 26.

He may be said to be righteous.

(1.) In regard of his *admission to this office*: He was righteously settled in it: every man cannot thrust himself into a court to be an advocate in another's cause; it is not enough to be entertained by the client, but there must be a legal admission to that station in the court. Christ was legally admitted into this office, he had God's order for it, *Ask of me*, *Psal.* 2. 8.

(2.) In regard of the *ground* of his admission, which was his loving righteousness. *Thou hast loved righteousness*, &c. *Heb.* 1. 9, *therefore God, even thy God*, thy God and thy Father, whom thou didst serve and rely upon in the office of mediation *hath, anointed*

* Δίκαιος Δικαιοσύνη. צדקה צדיק

thee, or inaugurated thee in the chief office of trust, *above thy fellows*. Unction was a solemn investiture of the high priests among the Jews in that honour and function. This anointing of Christ to the perpetual office of high priest (whereof this of his intercession is a considerable part, and a top-stone) was upon the account of the vindicating the rights of God, the honour of his law, by his death; he loved righteousness above his fellows, and therefore is advanced to the highest office above his fellows; he is such an one who hath made a complete satisfaction, and hath upon that account been entertained by God, and settled *an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck*. He was anointed as being most holy in finishing transgression, making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in *everlasting righteousness*, *Dan.* 9. 24. His holiness, manifested in all these, preceded his unction to that unchangeable priesthood which is exercised in heaven solely in his *intercession*, *Heb.* 7. 24, 25, 28.

(3.) In regard of his *person*. No exception against his person, or his carriage, to weaken any motion he should make. The known unrighteousness of an earthly advocate, is rather a ruin than support to the client's cause managed by him. Christ is righteous, therefore the Father cannot be jealous of his intruding upon his honour, or presenting any unbecoming suit to him. And because righteous, therefore fit to be trusted by us with our concerns; he can neither wrong the Father, nor his people; righteous towards God in preserving his honour, righteous towards us in managing our cause: and this righteousness was manifested in his being a propitiation for sin, whereby the righteousness of God was glorified, and the righteousness of the creature restored. This being without sin rendered him fit to be a sacrifice, 1 *John* 3. 5; which also renders him fit to be an intercessor. A guilty person is not a proper advocate for a crimi-

nal, nor can he well sue for another, who needs one to sue for himself.

(4.) In respect of *the cause he pleads*, viz. the *pardon* of sin. Which, upon the account of his being a propitiation for sin, he may rightly lay claim to. It is a just thing for him to plead, and a just thing for God to grant. *He is just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, 1 *John* 1. 9. Remission and sanctification, the great matters of Christ's plea, are righteous suits: he hath a sufficient price with him, whereby he may claim what he desires; and a price so large, that it is not only a sufficient compensation to God for what he desires for his people, but is equivalent to a world of sins.

(5.) Upon the account of his *righteousness* in all these respects, he must needs prevail with God. This the apostle implies; he represents him as an advocate, and as righteous for the comfort of believers, that through a temptation fall into sin, which could be none at all, if the efficacy of his intercession were not included in this of his righteousness; because he is righteous in his admission, in the foundation of his office, in his person, and the matter of his plea, he is worthy to be heard by God in his pleas; and since he wants nothing to qualify him for this office, he will not want entertainment with the Father in any suit he makes; and since his propitiation is sufficient for the sins of the whole world, we need not question the prevalency of his intercession for them that believe: if it hath a sufficiency for such multitudes, it must have an efficacy for those few that comply with the terms of enjoying the benefit of it. The righteousness of the person of our advocate renders his intercession grateful to God, and successful for us.

The foundation of this discourse, or the reason of it, is, *He is the propitiation for our sins, not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*, ver. 2. He hath expiated our sins, and appeased the wrath of God

which flamed against us. Not only for our sins who now live, but the sins of all believers *in the past and succeeding ages of the world, as well as the present;* his propitiation in the virtue and efficacy of it looks back upon all believers in every age since the foundation of the world; and looks forward to every believer, to the last period of time. The apostle's following discourse in this chapter evinces, that he restrains the efficacy of this expiation to believers that manifest their faith by their holiness, and walk in his commands. Or he is the propitiation, not only for the sins of us *Jews, but for the Gentiles* also. Or, he is a propitiation for the whole world, in point of the *sufficiency of the sacrifice,* and infinite value of his blood. The malignity of them that refuse it does not diminish the value of the price, nor the bounty and grace that offers to them the benefits of it upon believing.

We may now thus paraphrase the whole:—These things I write to you, not that you should sin upon a presumption of pardon, after the confession of your crimes, and from God's readiness to forgive, imagine you have a grand liberty to offend him with the greater security: no, but that you should, out of an ingenuous principle, fly from all occasions of offending a God of such boundless mercy; yet, if any of you that walk in communion with God, do fall through the infirmities of the flesh, and the strength of a temptation, be not so dejected as to despair, no, though the sin may happen to be very heinous; but let them consider, that they have a gracious and righteous advocate with the Father in heaven, even with that Father whom they have offended, to plead their cause, and sue out a pardon for them; and remember also, that this advocate is the very same person, who in the days of his flesh did expiate sin, and reconcile God by his bloody passion, and made so full an atonement, as that it was sufficient not only for the sins of the present age, but of the whole world; and hath been

efficacious for the blotting out the sins of all former believers before his coming. And to this advocate you must address yourselves by faith, for you must know him, i. e. believe in him, which is implied in verse the 3d.

We see here a description of the office of Christ in heaven. 1. The office itself, an office of advocacy. 2. The officer, *Jesus Christ the righteous.* 1. In his *person* and inauguration, Jesus Christ the Messiah, the anointed to this, as well as any other part of his work. 2. *Qualification*, righteous; righteous in his person, office, actions, cause. 3. The *court wherein* he exercises this office; in heaven; with the Father; his Father, our Father, a Father by affection as well as creation. 4. The *persons for whom, we*, us believers, us sinners after believing, every one of us, *if any man sin.* 5. The *plea itself propitiation.* 6. The *efficacy* of this plea, from the extensiveness of this propitiation, *for the whole world.*

Several observations may be drawn hence.

1. The doctrine of the gospel indulges *no liberty to sin: These things write I unto you, that you sin not.* Not that sin should not reign in you, but that sin should not be committed by you. Some understand, that not the act of sin, but the dominion of sin, is here chiefly intended by the apostle; * but the contrary is manifest, the term sin must be taken in the same sense in the whole sentence: but when he says, *if any man sin*, he means it of an act of sin, or a fall into sin; and therefore the former words *I write unto you that you sin not*, must be understood in the same sense; for if any man be under the empire of sin, and gives the reins to the lusts of his own heart, he is not the subject of Christ's intercession. Christ is an advocate for none but those that are in communion with him, and walk in the light, as appears by the connexion of this with the former chapter; if any such

* Mestrezat, 1 Jean 2. 1, 2. p. 237.

person fall into a sin, Christ is an advocate for him; *if any man sin*, i. e. any man of these I have before described. 1 *John* 1. 7. No sin must be indulged, it is the breath of hell, the defilement of the man. One sin brought death upon mankind, violated the divine law, deformed the face of the creation, wrecked the soul, inflamed the wrath of God; every sin is of this nature, and therefore must not be practised by us; not to hate sin, not to resolve against it, not to exercise ourselves in an endeavour to avoid every act of it, is inconsistent with a believer; it is not to receive, but to abuse and profane the gospel.

2. Believers while in the world, are *liable* to acts of sin. *If any man*, he supposes that grace may be so weak, temptation so strong, that a believer may fall into a grievous sin. While men are in the flesh, there are indwelling sins, and invading temptations; there is a body of death within them, and snares about them. The apostle excludes not himself, for putting himself by the term We, into the number of those that want the remedy, he supposes himself liable to the disease, *We have an advocate with the Father.*

3. Though believers do, through the strength of sin, the subtlety of the tempter, the power of a temptation, and weakness of grace *fall into sin*, yet they should not *despair of succour and pardon. If any man sin, we have an advocate.* Such a total despondency, would utterly ruin them; despair would bind their sins upon them. Be not only cast down under the consideration of the curses and threatenings of the law, but be erected by the promises of the gospel, and the standing office of Christ in heaven.

4. Faith in Christ must be exercised *as often as we sin. If any man sin, we have an advocate.* What is it to us that there is an advocate, unless we will put our cause into his hand; though we have a faithful attorney in our worldly affairs, yet upon any emergency we must entertain him, let him know our cause, if we expect relief. Though Christ being omniscient,

knows, and compassionates our case, yet he will be solicited; as though God knows our wants, he will be supplicated to for the supplies of them; though he understands our case, he would have us understand it too that we may value his office. Faith ought therefore to be exercised, because, by reason of our daily sins, we stand in need of a daily intercession. *If any man sin*, it implies that every man ought to make reflections on his conscience, lament his condition, turn his eye to his great advocate, acquaint him with his state, and entertain him afresh in his cause. Though he lives for ever to make intercession, it is only for *those that come to God by him* as their agent and solicitor, for those that come to the Judge, but first come to him as their attorney.

5. Christ is not an advocate for all men, but *only for them that believe*, and strive, and watch against sin: for those that are invaded by it, not for those that are affected to it; for those that slip and stumble into sin, not for those that lie wallowing in the mire. He does not say simply, *If any man sin*, as folding up in that expression every man in the world: but, *And if any man sin*, by that copulative particle linking the present sentence with the former chapter, signifying that he intends not this comfort for all, but for those that are in fellowship with God, and strive against temptation. Intercession being the application of the propitiation, implies the accepting the propitiation first. Christ in his mediatory prayer excludes all unbelievers; *I pray for them, I pray not for the world;* for *them*, for whom? *For those that have believed that thou didst send me*, *John* 17. 9. He *lives* for *ever to make intercession for those that come to God by him*, ver. 8; so that the coming to God by him is previous to the intercession he makes for them.

6. The proper intendment of this office of Christ, is for sins after a state of faith. He was a priest in his propitiation, to bring God and man together; he

is a priest in his intercession, to keep God and man together: his propitiation is the foundation of his intercession, but his intercession is an act distinct from the other; that was done by his death, this is managed in his life; his death was for our reconciliation, but his life is for the perpetuating that reconciliation; *If any man sin, we have an advocate, Rom. 5.* 10: if any man sin that hath entered into a state of communion with God, let him know that this office was erected in heaven to keep him right in the favour of the Judge of all the world. We should quickly mar all, and be as miserable the next minute after regeneration and justification as before, if provision were not in this way made for us. In the first acts faith eyes the propitiation of Christ, and rests upon his death; Christ as dying, is the great support of a soul new come out of the gulf of misery, and terrors of conscience: in after acts it eyes the life of Christ as well as the death, taking in both his propitiation and intercession together.

7. No man can possibly be justified *by his own works. We have an advocate Jesus Christ the righteous.* He directs them not to any pleas from their former walking in the light. If our justification be not continued by virtue of our own works after conversion; (for though they are works proceeding from renewed principles, and are the fruits of the operation of the Holy Ghost, spring from a root of faith and love, and are directed in the aim of them to the glory of God; yet one flaw spoils the efficacy of all in the matter of justification:) I say, if our justification be not continued by works after conversion, which have so rich a tincture on them, much less is it procured by works before conversion, wherein there is not a mite of grace. Our justification in the first sentence of it, and also in the securing and perpetuating our standing before God, depends not in the least upon ourselves, but upon the mediation of Christ for us. If justification and pardon owe their continuance

to Christ, they much more owe their first grant solely to the mediation of Christ.

8. Therefore observe further, that nothing of our own righteousness, or graces, or privileges are to be set up by us, *as joint advocates with Christ* before the tribunal of God in case of sin. The apostle saith not, *if any man sin,* let him plead his former obedience, let him plead his habitual grace, let him plead his adoption, and by that challenge the renewing of God's paternal affection; let him plead his present repentance; he strikes off our hands from all these, by that one word, *We have an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous.* We must enter no plea but what Christ enters, and that is only his propitiation. The apostle hints not any matter of the plea of this advocate, but this one. Those that set up their own satisfactions, penitential acts, their humiliation, remorses, or their other glittering graces, mightily intrench upon the honour of Christ, and his standing office in heaven. They may be of some use in the accusation of our own consciences, but not before God's tribunal. It is certain our own righteousness sticks as close to us, as our enmity to God; nay, a secret confidence in it, is the great citadel, and chiefest fort and strength wherein our enmity against God, and his righteousness lies; there is no man but is more willing to part with his sin, than to part with his righteousness; and there is nothing we find more starting up in us in the actings of grace, than the motions of spiritual pride: we would be eking out the merits of Christ, and be our own advocates: we would not let him manage the cause upon his own account, and by this we spiritually injure Christ in the work of mediation, as much as the papists do in setting up glorified saints and angels with him; may I not say, worse, since an unspotted angel, and a perfected saint is a more suitable companion for him, than a spotted righteousness and grace.

9. Christ is a person in the godhead *distinct from*

the Father; advocate with the Father. The Father and the Advocate are here distinct: a Judge and an advocate are different persons, have different offices, are exercised in different acts. The Father is considered as the Governor, and the advocate as a pleader.

10. How *divine is the gospel!* Sin not; if any man sin, it gives us comfort against the demerit of sin, without encouraging the acts of sin; it teaches us an exact conformity to God in holiness, and provides for our full security in Christ a powerful advocate. No religion is so pure for the honour of God, nor any so cordial for the refreshment of the creature.

PART II.

CHRIST AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER.

As much an advocate as he is a sacrifice—The office belongs to him as a priest—Was the end of his ascension—Is founded upon his oblation—Differs from the intercession of the Spirit—The authority of Jesus as an advocate—He is righteous and faithful—Compassionate—Ready and diligent—An earnest and pressing advocate—Joyful and cheerful—Acceptable—The only advocate—Not such an advocate as on earth—Yet expresses his desires in a supplicatory manner—His petitions have the nature of a claim—Presents the memorials of his death—Presents the persons of his redeemed—A perpetual advocate—His intercession founded upon his death—The exercise of it as durable as the office—This the reason and end of his exaltation in heaven.

THE doctrine I shall handle is this, *Christ is an advocate with the Father in heaven, continually managing the concerns of believers, and effectually prevailing for their full remission and salvation upon the account of the propitiation made by his death.*

We shall see, 1. That Christ is an advocate, in some general propositions. 2. What kind of advocate he is. 3. How he manages this advocacy, and intercession. 4. That he perpetually manages it. 5. That he effectually manages it. 6. That he manages it for every believer. 7. The use.

I. In general, Christ is *as much an advocate*, as he

is a *sacrifice*, as God is as much a governor, as he was a creator. As we say of providence, it is a continued creation, so of intercession it is a continued oblation; as providence is a maintaining the creation, so this intercession is a maintaining the expiation, and therefore is by some called a presentative oblation. The heathens had some notice of the necessity of some mediator or intercessor, either by tradition from Adam, from whom the notion of a Mediator might as well be transmitted, as the notion of expiation of guilt by bloody sacrifices; but while they retained the carcase, they lost the spirit of it; and while they preserved the sentiment of the necessity of an advocate, they framed many wrong and unserviceable ones: they dubbed their heroes, and men that had been benefactors to them in the world with this title after their death, and elevated them to be intermediate powers between God and them: * Some of those dæmons are fancied to carry up their prayers to God, and back their prayers with new supplications: others brought gifts from God; some handed their petitions and pleaded for them, others brought the answers of their prayers and relieved them, which the apostle alludes to; *For though there be that are called gods, as there be gods many, and lords many; but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him,* 1 *Cor.* 8. 5, 6. As they had many gods, so they had many mediators between themselves, and those particular gods; but saith he to us, there is but one God the principal cause, and one Lord Jesus Christ, the procuring cause of all things, by whose suit we are what we are, and enjoy what we have.

This intercession of Christ was *ancient*; it is as ancient as his first undertaking our suretyship, by virtue of which, the vengeance the sinner had merited, was deferred; *He upholds all things by the word of*

* Apuleius de Deo Socratis, p. 426.

his power, *Heb.* 1. 3, or his powerful or prevailing word, when they were ready to sink; not only as God by the word of providence, but as Mediator by his word of intercession, that the guilty sinner might not be dealt with by the rigours of justice, but in the tenderness of mercy. As he was fore-ordained a sacrifice, so he was fore-ordained an advocate: as he was a lamb slain, so he was an advocate entertained from the foundation of the world. His sacrifice though not performed, could not have a credit with God as it had, but his pleas upon the credit of that sacrifice must be admitted also. Thus were believers of old saved by him, and redeemed in his pity, as he was the *angel of the presence of God*, *Isa.* 63. 9, i. e. in the phrase of the new testament, *appearing in the presence of God for them*, *Heb.* 9. 24. noting the manner of his intercession. He did as an undertaker for them, interpose for their salvation; he bare them, and *carried them all the days of old*, alluding, I guess, to Aaron the high priest, bearing the names of the twelve tribes in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he went into the holy place to *intercede for the people*, *Exod.* 28. 29. He was an advocate for them to whom the credit of his propitiation did extend; but that did extend to those that believed before his coming in the flesh, to them therefore his intercession extended also. It was then indeed an intercession upon credit, it is now an intercession by demand, since the actual offering himself a victim.

1. This office of advocacy belongs to him as a *priest, and it is a part of his priestly office.* The high priest was not only to slay and offer the sacrifice in the outer part of the tabernacle on the anniversary day of expiation, but to enter with the fresh blood into the sanctuary, and sprinkle it seven times, to shew the perfection of that expiating blood which was figured by it. *In the blood*, *Levit.* 16. 14, was the expiatory virtue, *It is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul*, *Levit.* 17. 11, yet, the high priest did not

perform his office complete, till he had sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice with his finger on the mercy seat. He was also to bring a censer full of burning coals from off the altar, and incense in his hands, and put it upon the fire before the Lord, within the veil, that the *cloud in the incense might cover the mercy seat*, *Levit.* 16. 12. 13. As the high priest going into the holy of holies after the sacrifice, was a type of Christ's ascension after his passion on the cross; so the blood he was to sprinkle, was a type of that blood, * and the incense he was to kindle, a figure of the prayers of Christ after his entering into heaven. Incense in scripture frequently signifies *prayer*, and prayer is compared to incense, as the high priest's office was to enter into the sanctuary with this blood and incense to intercede for the people, and obtain a blessing for them; so it pertained to the office of Christ as a priest, not only to enter with his own blood, but with the incense of his prayers, as a cloud about the mercy seat, to preserve by his life the salvation he had merited by his death.

Christ entered into heaven as a priest, and in that capacity *Sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, *Heb.* 8. 1, and was settled an high priest for ever, by a solemn oath, *Psal.* 110. 4. There is therefore some priestly act, which he hath a capacity and an obligation by virtue of his office to perform for ever all the time he stays in heaven, till his second appearing, (as the high priest all the time he was in the holy of holies, was performing a sacerdotal act) which is not the act of sacrificing that was done by him on earth, as the sacrifice was slain without the veil; nothing but intercession can answer to that type which is called an appearing for us as a proxy or *attorney in the presence of God*, *Heb.* 9. 24, otherwise there is no priestly act for him to do, and so his being a priest would be an empty title, a name without an office. God's oath would be

* Amyraut sur Heb. 9. p. 74.

insignificant, if there were not some priestly act to be performed by him, as well as a priestly office vested in him; being a priest therefore he must have something to offer, even in heaven; which cannot be a new sacrifice, for that was but once to be done; it must be therefore the presenting his old, his body wounded, which is nothing else but this which we call intercession, a presenting to God this sacrifice of himself, and pleading the virtue of it in every time of need.

The apostle tells us, our salvation depends upon his intercession, and his intercession upon his priesthood, *Heb.* 7. 24, 25. Our salvation depends not simply upon his living for ever, for that he had done, if he had never come upon the earth to redeem us, but upon his *living for ever* in an unchangeable priesthood, the end of which unchangeable and everlasting priesthood is intercession. As our salvation depends not upon God's living for ever, for God had lived for ever had we been damned, but upon God's living for ever as a reconciled God and entered into covenant. As he was a priest upon the cross to make an expiation for us, so he is our priest in the court of heaven, to plead this atonement both before the tribunal of justice, and the throne of mercy, against the curses of the law, the accusations of Satan, the indictments of sin, and to keep off the punishment which our guilt hath merited.

2. This therefore was *the end* of his ascension, and sitting down at the right hand of God. In his incarnation he came from the Father to acquaint us with his gracious purposes, and how far he had agreed with God on our behalf; and at his ascension he went from us to the Father, to sue out the benefits he had so dearly purchased. He drew up an answer upon the cross to the bill, that sin by virtue of the law had drawn against us, and ascended to heaven as an advocate to plead that answer upon his throne, and rejoin to all the replies against it. When his offering was accepted, he went to heaven to the supreme

Judge to improve this acceptation of his sacrifice, by a negotiation which holds and continues to this day. *Christ is entered into heaven, Heb.* 9. 24, for what end? *To appear in the presence of God for us:* but may he not appear for us at first, and afterwards cease from it? No; *now* to appear for us, he entered into heaven long since, but he appears for us this instant; *now*, as if the apostle should have said, while I am writing, and you are reading, in this, in that instant Νῦν is he appearing for us as a public person, though there be a change in his condition from a state of humiliation, to a state of exaltation, yet there is no change in his office, *He is set down as a priest on the right hand of God, a minister of the sanctuary or of holy things, Heb.* 8. 1. 2, λειτουργὸς τῶν ἁγίων as a performer of a divine office for men.

As Moses forty days after his conducting the Israelites out of Egypt (the type of our redemption) ascended the mount, while his redeemed people were in a conflict with Amalek, to pray for them as a type of Christ; so Christ himself forty days after his resurrection, which was an evidence of our deliverance from spiritual slavery, ascended up into heaven to lift up his head there as our advocate for assistance to be granted to us against our spiritual enemies. And this intercession is the true design of his eternal life as a priest, and since the apostle lays it down as a manifest truth, witnessed by *all the prophets, Acts* 3. 21, that there is to be a *restitution of all things*, and the *heavens receive Christ till that restitution;* it will follow that he sits there in order to that restitution; not as an idle spectator, but a promoter of it by the efficacy of his mediation; and no other order did he receive from his Father after his resurrection, being declared the *begotten Son* by his resurrection, but to *ask*, for that follows just upon the declaration of being *his Son, Psal.* 2. 7, 8, which is interpreted in the New Testament of his resurrection. Asking was all required of him for the enjoying his reward, of which

the advantages of his people in enjoying the fruits of his death, is none of the meanest part in his own account, since it was the *joy set before him.* His mediation kept the world from ruin after man's fall, and his intercession promotes the world's restoration after his own passion.

3. This advocacy is founded upon *his oblation.* He is our advocate, because he was our propitiation; the efficacy of his plea depends upon the value and purity of his sacrifice: he is an intercessor in the virtue of his blood. The apostle therefore speaking of his intercession, *Heb.* 7. 24, considers it with a respect to his sacrifice, ver. 27, he could not have interceded as a priest, if he had not offered. As the high priest could not enter into the holy of holies, till by the slaying of the sacrifice he had blood to carry with him, so the true high priest was not to be admitted to solicit at the throne of grace, till he had satisfied the tribunal of justice; so that a propitiation and his advocacy are not one and the same thing, as the Socinians affirm, but distinct; the one is the payment, the other the plea; one was made on earth, the other is managed in heaven; the one was by his death, the other by his life; the one was done but once, the other performed perpetually; the first is the foundation of the second: because he paid the debt as our surety, he was fit to plead the payment as our attorney; what he finished on earth, he continually presents in heaven: by shedding his blood he makes expiation, by presenting his blood he makes intercession; in the one he prepares the remedy, and in the other he applies it. They are not the same acts, but the first act is the foundation of the second, and the second hath a connection with the first.

4. The nature of this advocacy *differs from that intercession or advocacy which is ascribed to the Spirit.* The spirit is said *to make intercession for us, Rom.* 8. 26, and he is in a way of excellency called the comforter, which, we heard, is the same word in

the Greek with this word, which is here translated advocate. Christ is an advocate with God *for us*, and the Spirit is an advocate with God *in us*, *John* 14. 17. Christ is our advocate, pleading for us in his own name; the Spirit is an advocate assisting us to plead for ourselves in Christ's name: Christ pleads for us in the presence of God, the Spirit directs us to such arguments as may be used for pleas for ourselves. The Spirit does not groan himself, but excites in us strong groans, by affecting us with our condition, and putting an edge upon our petitions, and strengthening us *in the inward man*, *Eph.* 3. 16. The Spirit is an advocate to indite our petitions, and Christ is an advocate to present them: some distinguish them, that Christ is an advocate by way of office, and the Spirit by way of assistance; but certainly the Spirit is an advocate by way of office to counsel us, as Christ is an advocate by way of office to plead for us, and the Spirit is as much sent to do the one in our hearts, as Christ was called back to heaven to do the other for our persons. The Spirit is an intercessor on earth, and Christ is an intercessor in heaven. Again, as there are two courts we are summoned to appear in, the court of the Supreme Judge, and the court of the Judge's deputy, our own consciences; Christ clears us by his plea at God's bar, and sets us right with the offended Father; the Spirit as Christ's deputy, being sent in his name, clears us at the bar of our own consciences; Christ answers the charge of the law in the court of God's justice, and the Spirit answers the accusations of sin in the court of God's deputy; the one pleads for our discharge above, the other pleads for our peace below, and the voice of God's Spirit is as mighty in us, as the voice of Christ's blood is mighty for us.

II. Thing. What *kind* of advocate Christ is.

1. An *authoritative* advocate. He intercedes not without a commission and without a command. God owns himself as the cause of his drawing near, and

approach to him; *I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me, Jer.* 30. 21, both in his first mediation and his following intercessions. He manages not an intercession merely in a way of charity, but in a way of authority, as a person intrusted by God, and dignified to this end; not only as our friend, but as a divine officer; as an attorney may manage the suit of his kinsman, but not only as being related to his client, but as being admitted by the court into such an office. Christ is not only admitted as one of kin to us, but commissioned as mediator for us. This was promised, that he should be *a priest upon his throne, Zech.* 6. 13. The commission takes date from the day of his resurrection; when he was declared to be the begotten Son of God, he had an order to ask: *Psal.* 2. 8. This charge was given him at his solemn inauguration, and was to precede all the magnificent fruits of it. * God settles Christ a Priest and Intercessor, while he commands him to ask the Heathen for his inheritance; which connection the apostle confirms, *Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, thou art my Son, Heb.* 5. 5: but the priesthood does not appear to be settled upon Christ by any other expression than this, *Ask of me.* The Psalm speaks of his investiture in his kingly office; the apostle refers this to his priesthood, his commission for both took date at the same time; both bestowed, both confirmed by the same authority; the office of asking is grounded upon the same authority, as the honour of king. Ruling belonged to his royal office, asking to his priestly.

After his resurrection the Father gives him a power and command of asking, and obliges himself to a grant of what he should ask; the same power that admits him to be an advocate, assures him he should be a prevailing one; the obligation to give is

* Rivet. in Ps. 2. 8.

as strong as his order to ask. As his death was the end of his incarnation, so his intercession was the end of his ascension; his dignity in heaven was given him for the exercise of this particular office, *Heb.* 7. 25. As he had his life from God, so he had it for this end, to make intercession. He had a command to be a sufferer, and a body prepared him for that purpose; so he had likewise a command to be an advocate, and a life given him, and a throne prepared for him at the right hand of God to that end.

The like commission is mentioned; *He shall cry unto me, thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation, Psal.* 89. 26; and this after his exaltation, ver. 24. 25, yet for the full completing of it, ver. 27, the matter of his plea is there mentioned, *thou art the rock of my salvation,* the foundation, the first cause of all the salvation I have wrought in the world, being the first mover of it, and promising the acceptance of me, in the performance of what was necessary for it. As he hath authority to cry to God, so he hath an assurance of the prevalency of his cry, in regard of the stability of the covenant, the covenant of mediation which shall *stand fast* with him, or be faithful to him, *and my mercy I will keep for him for evermore,* ver. 27, the treasures of my mercy are reserved only to be opened and dispensed by him; and the enjoying of his spiritual seed for ever, and the *establishing of his own throne* thereby, is the promised fruit of this cry, ver. 28.

Christ indeed was a surety by authority, but by a greater right an advocate; that he was accepted in the capacity of a surety was pure mercy; it was at God's liberty whether he would accept a surety for us, or accept Christ for our surety; but after he had accepted him, upon the doing of his part in the work of redemption he hath a right to the application of redemption, and consequently to the office of advocate, to see right done us, to see our debts discharged, and to put justice in mind of the full payment he hath

made. He hath a right to it, a commission for it, a command to discharge it, he is as much bound to intercede as he was to sacrifice, for it is as much belonging to his priestly office as the other.

2. He is a *wise* and skilful advocate. Every advocate must understand the law of the state, and the cause of his client, that he may manage it to the best advantage. This advocate hath an infinite knowledge as God, and a full and sufficient knowledge as man. His Deity communicates the knowledge of our cause to his humanity, and excites the compassions of his nature; he knows the sincerity of his clients' hearts, their inward groans, and breathings which cannot be expressed; he knows our cause better than we do ourselves, he needs not the representing our own cause from ourselves, *he needs not that any should testify of man, he knows what is in man*, *John* 2. 25, he understands the best, and the worst of our cause, he hath a clear view of all the flaws in it better than they are visible to ourselves.

If he had no more skill and knowledge of us than what our outward expressions might furnish him with, he might mistake the business of a stammering spirit, and on the other side be imposed upon by the voluble expression and flourishing gifts of others; he might be cheated by the hypocrisy of some, and mistake the concerns of his own people who so often mistake themselves, and are not able to express their own wants; but it cannot be so with him, *He knows all things*, he knows those that love him and those that hate him, *John* 21. 17. He understands our cause, he understands the law according to which he is to plead, the articles of agreement between the Father and himself, and he understands the fulness and redundancy of his own merit.

He uses arguments proper to the cause he pleads, and drawn from the nature of the person he applies himself to. When he meets the church in weakness and distress by potent adversaries, and would have the

Jews delivered, and the temple rebuilt, he solicits God as *the Lord of Hosts*, *Zech.* 1. 12. When he finds his people in danger of sin and temptation, he petitions God under the title of *Holy*, *John* 17. 11. When he would have promises performed to them, he appeals to the *righteousness* of the Father, *John* 17. 25, it being part of his righteousness, to fulfil that word which he hath passed, and make good the grant which so great a Redeemer merited.

He pleads the respects he had to the divine will in the exercise of every part of his office both of priest and prophet, *a prophetic* psalm of Christ. *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness, and thy salvation, I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation*, *Psa.* 40. 9; the adding *thy* to every one of them is emphatical, it was *thy* righteousness I had commission to declare, *thy* faithfulness I had order to proclaim, *thy* mercy I had a charge to publish, thou wert as much interested in all that I did as I myself was. I shall be counted false and a liar, thou will be counted unjust and cruel, if all be not fulfilled as I have spoken; since it was thy rule I observed, and thy glory I aimed at in declaring it, disgrace not thyself and me in refusing the petition of such a supplicant, who believes in my word which I gave out by thy authority.

Surely as Christ observed the will of God upon earth, so he is wise to intercede for nothing but according to those rules he observed in his humiliation, which was whatsoever might honour and manifest the righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, truth, and loving-kindness of the Father. This is a part of his wisdom, to plead for nothing, but for what he hath the nature of God to subscribe to his petitions, and back him in them. It is not for the honour of an advocate to undertake a cause he cannot bring to pass, nor will any wise man engage in a suit which he hath not some strong probability to effect. Our Lord, in

whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, stands more upon his honour than to undertake a cause he cannot accomplish.

3. He is a *righteous and faithful* advocate. He is as righteous in his advocacy as he was in his suffering. His being without sin rendered him fit to bear our sins on the cross; *He was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin,* 1 *John* 3. 5; and it renders him fit to plead for the pardon of our sins upon his throne; as he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, so he is exalted to perfect the conquest by his intercession. If he had sin, he could not be in heaven, much less a pleader there. God tried him and found him faithful in all his house; in all his own concerns, and the concerns of his people which are his spiritual temple. The *altar of incense,* which was overlaid with *pure gold* all about the sides of it, *Exod.* 37. 26, and set *before the ark of the testimony, Exod.* 40. 5, signified the purity of his soul, and his freedom from any kind of corruption in those pleas he makes in the holy of holies above, where he *ever lives to make intercession for those that come to God, Heb.* 7. 25. But in what state? An high priest, *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,* ver. 26; he lives in heaven, a pure person, fitted by his purity to such an office. The words refer not to Christ's life in the world, * but to his life in heaven, *separate from sinners* in regard of communion in their sins, but not in regard of compassion to their miseries. He hath nothing of his own concerns to divert him from our business; as he had no sin of his own to suffer for in the world, so he had no sin of his own to solicit the pardon of in heaven. He having an incomparably righteous nature, will be exactly righteous in his office.

After Christ's resurrection, when he had finished his work on earth, and was to begin it in heaven,

* As Crellius well notes.

God saluted him with great kindness; *This day have I begotten thee,* * *Psa.* 2. 7. God regarded him as his only begotten Son, of the same holy and righteous nature with himself; justified him as his righteous servant, and thereupon gives him a power of asking, so that the prevalency of his intercession depends upon the righteousness of his person, and the righteousness of his cause; he pleads his own righteousness, which carries with it a necessity of having sin pardoned, which the righteousness of God is as ready to remit, as the righteousness of Christ was to purchase the remission of it. Whatsoever Christ intercedes for, is righteous; if it were unrighteous, it were not fit to be moved to God, this would be to endeavour to persuade him to an unworthy act, contrary to his nature. If any proposal of his were unrighteous, Christ would be false to God, and his own principles, in making and defending such a motion. This would be to destroy all the ends of his coming, and design of his death, which was to declare the righteousness of God, advance it in the world, and in the souls of men. If Christ should undertake an unrighteous cause, what ground of confidence and security could any righteous man have in him?

4. He is *a compassionate* advocate. His compassion to us is joined with his faithfulness to God in his priestly office, *Heb.* 2. 17. So that if he be not tender to believers in misery, he is not faithful to God in the exercise of his office. His intercession springs from the same tenderness towards us as his oblation, and both are but the displaying of his excessive charity. His compassion to us was a lesson he learned, together with obedience to God, by his sufferings, *Heb.* 5. 8. He learned how necessary obedience was to God, and how grievous the misery of man was, and being instructed in one as well as

* Upon which the Chaldee hath this note. Purus es acsi hac die creavissem te.

the other, his pity to us had as deep an impression, as his sense of obedience to the divine will; and since one part of his obedience was to make way for the opening the treasures of his mercy, he cannot be obedient to his Father, without being merciful to us. He was exposed to such a condition as wrested from him strong cries for himself, that he might send up strong cries for us in our misery. He was a man of sorrows, that he might be a man of compassions: he indeed had pity of old; for with such an affection he redeemed the Israelites, *Isa.* 63. 9. His compassions are not lesened by an assumption of our humanity, but an experimental compassion gained in his human nature, which the divine was not capable of, because of the perfection of impassibility.

By a reflection upon his own condition in the world, he is able to move our cause with such a tender feeling of it, as if he had the smart of it present in his own heart. The greatest pity must reside in him, since the greatest misery was endured by him in our nature; what he had a real feeling of on earth, he must have a memorative feeling of in heaven: he cannot forget above, what he experienced below; since one part of his priestly office in suffering, was to fit him for a more faithful and merciful exercise of the other part in his intercession; not an affliction was laid upon him, but was intended to compose his heart to a sympathizing frame with his people. *We have not an high priest which cannot be touched, Heb.* 4. 15. There is not a taste of bitterness in any temptation he endured, but was more deeply to engrave in his heart a tenderness to us; nor can those compassions in him, be equalled by any creature; no angel nor man can be touched with such a sense as he is, because no angel nor man ever smarted under such extremity as he did.

Our pity to ourselves cannot enter into comparison with his pity to us. With what a sense of his disciples' condition did he pray for them upon earth? *John* 17. The glory of heaven hath made no change

in his judgment and affections; he hath the same will in heaven that he had on earth; the same human will, and therefore the same human compassions in league with his divine: he was God-man on earth, man to suffer for us, and God to render that suffering valuable; he is God-man in heaven, man to pity us, and God to render that compassion efficacious for us. This fits him for a zealous prosecution of our cause in heaven. His intercession receives a sharper edge from the things which he suffered; the taste that he had of the infirmities of men, and the wrath they are obnoxious unto, warms his heart, and strengthens his pleas, and makes him a more zealous solicitor at the throne of divine grace; as an earthly advocate that had drank deep of the same cup, and had had the same suit for himself, as he hath for his client, better understands the cause, and is able to manage it with a deeper sense than if he had never felt the like misery. Our Advocate was framed in the same mould with us, in regard of his nature, and was cast into the same furnace of wrath which we had merited; and thus knowing the miseries of man, not by a bare report, but experience of the heaviness of the burthen, is more careful to solicit the liberty and absolution of every comer to God by him from the sentence that hangs over them; and the greater their miseries are, the more are his compassions exercised.

The more deplorable the misery is, the greater object of pity the person is that feels it; and to exercise compassion when the object stands most in need of it, is very agreeable to a compassionate nature, such as Christ's is; and therefore if he had had so much pity to procure the redemption of the Israelites from a temporal and bodily captivity; much more will he be careful to free believers from the spiritual captivity they groan under, since in that condition they are more suitable objects of compassion, than any man can be under a mere bodily and temporal affliction. And therefore, whenever the knowledge of our con-

dition comes to his humanity, by the assistance of his divinity, we cannot have a more powerful solicitor than the experimental sense he hath in his own breast. To conclude, he is a compassionate Intercessor, because he was a great sufferer, as compassionate to us as he is valuable with God; his merit for us is not greater than his pity to us.

5. He is *ready and diligent;* he is never out of the way when the cause should be heard, he always sits at the right hand of the Father, who is the Judge of the world, and is never out of his presence, When *Stephen* saw *the heavens opened, he saw Christ standing at the right hand of God, Acts* 7. 55, in the posture of an advocate and protector, as sitting is the posture of a prince, and a judge. He times his intercession for the church, according to the providential state of the world, *Zech.* 1. 11, 12; he had sent out his messengers to view the state of the earth, who upon their return brought him word that it was in peace and rest; upon which news he petitions for the restoring of Jerusalem: he would not let slip the opportunity of such an argument, that the church, the seat of the divine glory on earth, should be in misery, when the world, wherein God did less concern himself, flourished in peace and prosperity: shall the enemies of the church be in a better condition than the people thou hast intrusted with thy law? His messengers brought him an exact account of things, and he is diligent to take hold of the first occasion to solicit the security or restoration of his people: now that the princes of the earth have nothing of war to hinder them, put it into their hearts to deliver thy people, and rebuild thy temple.

It is one property of Christ to be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isa.* 11. 3; to be sensible of any thing that may promote the honour and worship of God, or may obstruct and lessen it; his sense is as quick as his understanding, and readily interposes for whatsoever may conduce to the mani-

festation of the attributes of God, which is the foundation of his fear in the world. He is ready to put in a plea for us to the Father, and is more studious of our welfare, and to bring us off, than we are ourselves. In the midst of his woes he gave us an evidence of it; though his disciples were so careless and senseless of his present condition, that they fell asleep when they had most need to watch both for him and themselves; yet after his reproof for their negligence, he frames an excuse for them, from the consideration of their weakness, before they could apologize for themselves. *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, Mat.* 26. 41. He lays it upon the *infirmities of their flesh*, though it was also the security of their spirits, as appears by his reproof; is he not as ready to plead the same for us in his glory? He is always ready at the throne of grace, to give out grace and mercy in *a time of need, Heb.* 4. 16; we have no reason to fear his absence from that throne of grace we solicit in our necessities; he is passed into the heavens, seated there in a perpetual exercise of this office, to entertain all comers at all times, and can no more be sleepy, than he can be cruel; no more cease to be diligent, than he can be bereaved of his compassions.

6. He is an *earnest and pressing* advocate. When an advocate hath much business for himself, it will cool him in the affairs of his client: Christ hath once offered up himself, and being thereupon advanced, has no need to offer up himself again: he is secure from any further suffering in his person; he hath nothing to do for himself, but all his ardency is employed for his people, which is the reason rendered why he *lives to make intercession for the comers to God by him, Heb.* 7. 25, compared with ver. 27. *He needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sin, and then for the people's, for this he did once, when he offered up himself.* He needs not any solicitousness for himself, as before the

time of his death: he hath nothing now to blemish his happiness, and divert his affections from the concerns of his people. He hath no strong cries now to put up for himself, all his affections run in another channel, his whole soul is pledged in the business, as the word signifies in *Jer.* 30. 21; *He hath engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord:* he hath undertaken it with the greatest cordiality of spirit. His expostulation speaks his earnestness of old; *O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem? Zech.* 1. 12. Like an expression we use, when we would rouze a drowsy person in a time of danger, and snatch him out of the fire; as if Christ would awaken the mercy of God to manifest itself: *how long wilt thou*, thou who hast an affection to the captives, an affection to me, their solicitor; thou who hast mercy to pity them, and power to rescue them; thou, who knowest that the set time of their captivity is at an end, and hast faithfulness to be as good as thy word?

The seventeenth of John is a representation of his carriage in heaven, how he presses his Father for his people. When he prayed for himself, it is, *Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me;* it is then not *as I will*, but *as thou wilt;* but for his disciples' glory and salvation: it is *I will*, ver. 24, as though he were more a judge than an advocate; and had more a right to a sovereign dominion, than that of a plea.* What did the *censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar*, which the high priest was to carry *within the veil, into the holy of holies, Lev.* 16. 12, 13, represent, but the ardency of the affections in the soul of Christ, when he presents the incense of our prayers to his Father in heaven?

The names of the tribes of Israel were to be not only upon the high priest's shoulders, *Exod.* 28. 12, but also upon his breast-plate, ver. 29, near his heart, when

* Amyraut, sur 9. Heb. p. 84.

his face is towards them; and as near his heart, when in desertion his back is turned upon them; they are next his heart all the time he is in the holy of holies. Great affections cannot be without earnestness in their cause. He desired not more earnestly to be baptized with his bloody baptism on earth, than to complete all the fruits of it in heaven: he was not more vehement to shed his blood, than he is to plead it. No man is more solicitous to increase the honour and grandeur of his family, than Christ is to secure the happiness of his people. Our prayers for ourselves, when tinctured with the greatest affection, cannot be so fervent as his pleas for our souls are at the right hand of his Father; for to what purpose did he carry up those human affections to heaven, but to express and act them in their liveliness and vigour for us, and to us?

7. He is a *joyful and cheerful* advocate; he hath not a sour kind of earnestness, as is common among men, but an earnestness with a joy, as being the delight of his heart. When he prayed in the garden for himself, he was in an agony; but in his mediatory prayer, a model of his intercession in heaven, he was in a *cheerful frame*, *John* 17, for it was his prayer after the most comfortable sermon he ever preached to his disciples, wherein he had heaped up all the considerations that might be capable to elevate their hearts, and he makes this use of it in the end; *That they should be of good cheer at his victory, because he hath overcome the world*, *John* 16. 33. And in this frame he puts up this mediatory prayer immediately, to signify to them both the matter and manner of his intercessions in heaven for them, and that he rejoices in putting up these requests above, as well as he did when he presented them at times before, as is intimated; *These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves*, ver. 13, that they might have such a joy in the considerations

of it, and in the receiving thy favour, as I have in the petitioning for them.

Certainly he does as well rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, since he hath laid so great an obligation upon it, as he did formerly in the prospect of what he was to do for it. His death was sweet to him after his resurrection, the very remembrance of it was a pleasure; in which sense some understand that, *I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me, Jer.* 31. 25, 26. It is certain some passages in that chapter are applied to Christ's time, as ver, 15, the weeping at Ramah was a prediction of the slaying of infants by Herod, *Matt.* 2. 17, 18. And the *creating a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man*, ver. 22, is generally understood of the conception and incarnation of Christ; and the expression in ver. 25, seems to be too magnificent to be understood of any other prophet, than that in whom the weary find rest; and the consideration of the success of his incarnation and passion make his sleep, i. e. death, pleasant to him at his awaking, or resurrection. His pleading therefore for the fruit of his death cannot be bitter, or distasteful to him; he delights as much in the exercise of this office, as he did in the first undertaking of it, and consecration to it; since he accounted his priesthood an honour, when God called him to it, he will not think it disgraceful when his people own it, and desire the exercise of it in their behalf.

8. He is an *acceptable* advocate: he hath an active joy in his intercession, a passive joy in his acceptation. He is the favourite of the court wherein he pleads, acceptable to the Judge in his person, acceptable to him in his office, acceptable to him in the suits he manages; his intercession is nothing else, but the presenting to God the sacrifice which restored to him the pleasure of his creation, gave him a rest and

continues it. The savour of that sacrifice in heaven which was offered on earth, is grateful to the Judge of the world; it is as sweet to God as the Levitical incense, the type of it, can be to man, mentioned *Exod.* 30. 34, 35, 36, and reserved for the service of the temple, a composition of the sweetest and most aromatic simples. How much sweeter is the advocacy of Christ to God, than the most fragrant scents can be to us?

In the presence of God he meets with a *fulness of joy*; *Thou wilt shew me the paths of life, and shew me in thy presence a fulness of joy, and pleasures at thy right hand for evermore, Psa.* 16. 11. So Cocceius reads it. This is to be understood of his mediatory pleasure, he hath in his being in the presence of God, or appearing in the presence of God for us, *Heb.* 9. 24. For you know that psalm is to be understood of Christ, which is evidenced by ver, 10, applied to him, *Acts* 2, 31; & 13. 35. *Thou wilt shew me the path of life*, thou wilt bring me into glory, as the Saviour of man, and the head of the believing world, of those saints, and excellent ones, in whom my delight hath been; in this presence I shall have fulness of joy in the reflections upon my obedience, and the plentiful effusions of thy grace upon the account of it. Pleasures flow with a full and perpetual torrent from the right hand of God, by the mediation of Christ; it is as if he should have said, I shall have a fulness of joy after my bitter passion, in the contemplation of thy pleased countenance to the sons of men, and thy right hand shall communicate spiritual blessings upon the account of this passion, which shall be the delight of my soul; all this thou wilt shew me after my resurrection, to testify how acceptable my mediation hath been to thee.

Since God constituted him a priest by an irreversible oath, an oath he would never repent of, *Heb.* 7. 21, and thereby confirmed him in an unchangeable priesthood, ver. 24; as he hath an unchangeable office, so

he hath an endless acceptation; he that never will repent of fixing him in it, will never repent of his exercising of it. As God is infinitely pleased with this office, so he is infinitely pleased with the execution of the charge; and the presenting his death for any soul is inexpressibly grateful to the reconciled Judge. His deity adds a value and efficacy to his intercessions in heaven, as it did to his passion on earth.

9. He is the *sole* advocate. Those of Rome distinguish between mediators of redemption, and mediators of intercession; the first they appropriate to Christ, in the other they make angels and saints his companions, and thus snatch the glory from Christ to confer it upon a creature; but since our high priest alone hath the honour to sit at the right hand of God, he alone hath the honour of this office. To which of the angels or saints did he at any time say, *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance?* the office and power of asking belongs to him exclusively. Since he trod the wine-press alone, he solicits our cause alone, intercession being founded upon propitiation; he therefore, the sole propitiator, is the sole intercessor: he only hath the right to plead for us, who had the right to purchase us. As God never gave a commission to redeem us to any other, so he never gave a commission to any other to appear for us in that court.

The entering into the holy of holies with the perfuming incense, was annexed to the honour of the chief priesthood, which had any of the inferior priests usurped, they had incurred the pains of death. It is a disparagement to Christ to interest any creature in it, as though he wanted some favourite to give him a full credit with the Father, and some monitors to excite his affections to us; or as though the suits he had to manage were so numerous, that he wanted a multitude of clerks to draw up the petitions he had to present. It is our Saviour's prerogative to be *the first* and *the last;* as he was the first that stepped up to keep the

world from perishing by the hand of justice, so he will be the last in securing it; as he was the first in purchasing, so he will be the last in completing, that the whole work of redemption may be ascribed to him alone; as he is the sole author of it by his passion, so he will be the sole finisher of it by his intercession.

III. *How* Christ manages this advocacy and intercession.

In general. Christ as *God* essentially considered, does not intercede in heaven. He that intercedes by way of petition, wants the blessing of that person he intercedes with, and in that respect, is inferior to him. He no more intercedes in heaven as God, than he prayed on earth as God. His intercession as well as his passion belongs indeed to his person; and as his Deity is in personal union with his humanity, so his prayers and intercessions may be called the intercessions of God, as well as his blood was called the blood of God. As the human nature suffered, and the divine nature made it valuable, so the human nature intercedes by way of motion, and the divine nature makes it prevalent. His person suffered, but only in the human nature, the divine not being passible, so may we not say the person of the Son of God intercedes, but the human nature only supplicates? He is our advocate as he was our propitiation.

1. Christ is not an advocate in heaven in *such a supplicating manner as he prayed in the world.* This servile way of praying as they call it, because it was performed by Christ in the form of a servant, is not agreeable to his present glorious estate. It is as unsuitable to his state in heaven, as his prayers with strong cries were suitable to his condition on earth; such prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, belong only to the *days of his flesh*, *Heb.* 5. 7, i. e. his state of humiliation, wherein he was encompassed with the infirmities of the flesh; but such a

posture becomes him not in heaven, where he is stripped of all those natural infirmities and marks of indigence. Though such a kind of petitioning is not inconsistent with his humanity as joined to his divine, and making one person,* yet his praying with so deep a humiliation as he did in this lower region of the earth, is inconsistent with his glorified state in heaven; for if the glory of heaven wipes tears from the eyes of the members, it does certainly from the eyes of the head, nor is it a supplication in the gesture of kneeling, for he is an advocate at the right hand of God, where he is always expressed as *sitting*, and but once as I remember as *standing*, and that was in the case of Stephen, *Acts* 7. 55. This some of the fathers and others call a servile manner of praying, and say that it was not convenient for the Father to require it of Christ in his elevated state, nor for the Son to perform it.

2. Yet it may be a *kind of petition*, an expressing his desires in a *supplicatory manner*. Though he be a king upon his throne, yet being settled in that royal authority by the Father, as his delegate, he is in regard of that inferior to the Father; and likewise in the economy of Mediator; and also as his human nature is a creature, he may be a petitioner without any debasement to himself, to that power, by whose authority he is settled in his dignity, constituted in his mediatory office, and was both made, and continues a creature. Though *God hath put all things under him*, yet he did not put himself under him, but remains in his full authority, 1 *Cor.* 15. 27. His divine nature in union with his human, is no argument against it, for then he should not have petitioned on earth; he was then the same person in his disguise that he is now in glory. There are promises made

* If it were, he could not then have supplicated in the world as he did in the garden; for his humanity was joined to his divinity in that humbled, as well as in his exalted state; he was God in the days of his flesh when he lived amongst mortals, as well as now in the days of his glory.

to him which are not yet accomplished, enemies to be made his foot-stool which are not yet brought into that lowest degree of subjection; divine promises are to be turned into petitions; the heathen are promised to be his inheritance, but asking was ordered to precede the performance, *Psal.* 2. 8, שאל signifies to *desire* and *wish*, as well as to ask. There are some things still of want, though not in Christ personal, yet in Christ mystical, till the church be fully completed. He is an high priest in heaven, and it is the office of a high priest to pray for those for whom he hath offered the sacrifice.

Why should asking by way of desire or petition, be more uncomely when there is yet something of indigence, than praising after supplies which Christ does in heaven; if we understand those words of Christ, *I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving*, *Psal.* 69. 30, after he should be set on high? and *My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation, and I will pay my vows before them that fear him*, *Psal.* 22. 25. Both which Psalms, upon the perusal, you will find prophetic of Christ. And himself expresses, that what he was to do in heaven for the accomplishment of the promise of the Spirit which he had made to them, was to be by way of prayer; *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter*, *John* 14. 16. He speaks of an asking or praying, (for the word signifies both the one and the other) not in this life, but after his ascension, for the first and necessary fruit of his death, viz. the comforter. He evidenceth hereby, that his glory should not cloud his mercy, and the cares of their concerns; his love should be stronger than death or glory, and he would not rest, till he had obtained of infinite goodness what was necessary for them; this he would do by way of asking, which inclines to a petitionary way when a boon is desired.

3. It is such a petition as is in the nature of a *claim and demand*. It is not a petition for that which is at

the liberty of the petitioned person to grant or refuse, but for that which the petitioner hath a right to by way of purchase, and the person petitioned to cannot in justice deny. An advocate is an officer in a court of judicature, demanding audience and sentence in a judicial way; so that this intercession of Christ is not a bare precarious intercession; * for as when he was in the world, he *taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes*, *Matt.* 7. 29, so in heaven he intercedes as one having authority by virtue of his mediatory power, and not as an ordinary supplicant. He hath a right to demand; on earth indeed he had only promises of assistance to put in suit, but in heaven he pleads the conditions performed on his part, upon which the promises made to Christ become due to him. It is now, Father, *I have glorified thee upon the earth, now glorify me with thy own self*, *John* 17. 4, 5. He pleads for his people as they are the gift of his Father, and as they have *received his words*, ver. 8, he pleads his own commission as one sent, ver. 23, he minds the Father of the covenant between them both, as God gave him a command what he should do in the world, which was no other but an injunction to perform those conditions which had been agreed upon, and that will of God expressed in the covenant of redemption, which is called the *will of God*, *Heb.* 10. 7. Christ having done this will, mediates for the performance of the conditions God was bound to by this covenant, and claims the performance of them *jure pacti*, as a debt due to his meritorious obedience on the cross; so that it is not a desire only in a way of charity, but a claim in a way of justice, by virtue of meriting, and a demand of the performance of the promise.

There were promises made by God to Christ as our head and representative *before the world began*, *Tit.* 1. 1, 2, and 2 *Tim.* 1. 9, when he was fore-

* Marcs. contra Volkel, did 3. cap. 38. p. 378.

ordained to suffering, 1 *Pet.* 1. 20. Eternal life was promised *before the world began;* to whom could this promise of so long a date be made? not to any creature, since it was before any creature had a being; therefore to Christ, not for himself, who was the eternal Son of God. This promise, and this grace given us in Christ, he sues out by his intercession as a feoffee in trust for us; and it being added, *which God that cannot lie promised,* gives us an intimation of the manner of Christ's pleading, in calling the truth of God to witness the validity of the promise which he pleads. It seems to be in an expostulatory manner, as we find it before his incarnation; *How long, Lord, Zech.* 1. 12, which was upon the account of his future incarnation; for which reason he that is called the *angel,* ver. 12, who was the angel of the covenant, is called *the man,* ver. 10. So the expostulation of Elias with God is called particularly intercession. *Rom.* 11. 2, and *Rev.* 3. 5, intimates it by way of claim, *He that overcomes, I will confess his name before my Father;* I will confess him plainly and clearly, and claim him as one that belongs to me. His advocacy for us is a confession of our interest in him, our owning of him; by virtue of which confession or claim we are set right in the court of God, as those for whom he hath shed his blood.

4. This intercessory demand or asking is accompanied with a *presenting the memorials of his death.* It is a commemoration of the sacrifice which he offered on earth for our expiation, and the whole power of intercession, with the prevalency of it, is wholly upon this foundation: it is a presenting the efficacy of his death, the virtue of his blood, the pleasure of God in the sacrifice offered by him. It is by the displaying the whole merit of his passion that he solicits for us. Intercession is not properly a sacerdotal act without respect to the sacrifice: it was with the blood of the sacrifice that the high priest was to enter into the holy

of holies, and sprinkle it there: the same blood that had been shed without on the day of expiation, was to be carried within the veil: what was done typically, Christ does really; first give himself a sacrifice, and then present himself as the sacrifice for us. The apostle shows us the manner of it, *Heb.* 12. 24; the blood of Christ is a speaking blood, as well as the blood of Abel; * it speaks in the same manner as Abel's blood did, though not for the same end.

As the blood of Abel, presenting itself before the eyes of God, was as powerful to draw down the vengeance of God, as if it had uttered a cry as loud as to reach to heaven; so the blood of Christ being presented before the throne of God, powerfully excites the favour of God by the loudness of its cry. He speaks by his blood, and his blood speaks by its merit: the petitions of his lips had done us no good without the voice of his blood. He stands as a Lamb slain, when he presents the prayers of the saints, *Revel.* 5, 6, 8, with his bleeding wounds open, as so many mouths full of pleas for us, and every one of them is the memorial and mark of the things which he suffered, and for what end he suffered them; as the wounds of a soldier received in the defence, and for the honour of his country, displayed to persons sensible of them, are the loudest and best pleas for the grant of his request.

If the party-coloured rainbow being looked upon by God, minds him of his covenant not to destroy the world again by a *deluge*, *Gen.* 9. 14, 15, 16; much more are the wounds which Christ bears both in his hands, feet, and side, remembrancers to him of the covenant of grace made with repenting and believing sinners. The look of God upon those wounds whereby so great an oblation is remembered, does as efficaciously move him to look kindly upon us, as the look upon the rainbow disposes him to the continuance of

* Daille sur le descent d' Esprit, Serm. 1. p. 461.

the world. If our Saviour had not a mouth to speak, he hath blood to plead, and his blood cries louder in heaven for us, than his voice did in any of the prayers he uttered upon earth; for by this his performance of the articles on his part is manifested, and the performance of the promises on God's part solicited; when he sees what the Redeemer hath done, he reflects upon what himself is to do; the blood of Christ speaks the tenor of the covenant of redemption made with Christ on the behalf of sinners.

5. It is a presenting our persons to God together with his blood in *an affectionate manner:* as the high priest when he went into the holy of holies was to bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, *Exod.* 28. 29; to which the church alludes in her desire that she might be *set as a seal upon the heart* of her beloved, *Cant.* 8. 6, and perhaps an allusion may be also in *Rev.* 3. 5, confessing the names of the victorious sufferers before his Father, bearing their names visibly before him. The persons of believers are his jewels locked up in the cabinet of his own breast, and showed to his Father in the exercise of his priestly office.

IV. The fourth thing. That Christ *perpetually* manages this office.

The first evidence is in the text, *we have* an advocate, we have at this present, we have an advocate actually remembering us in his thoughts, and presenting us to his Father; we in this age, we in all ages, till the dissolution of the world; without any faintness in the degrees of his intercession, without any interruption in time; he never ceases the exercise of this office, so far as it is agreeable to that high and elevated state wherein he is. As there are continual sins of believers in all ages of the world, so there are constant pleas of the advocate. This epistle was written many years after the ascension of Christ, some think in the time of John's banishment in the isle of Patmos, some think after; yet at that time he

owns himself to have a share in the benefit of this intercession. The term *we* is inclusive of himself; Christ is an intercessor for us in the whole course of our pilgrimage, all the time that we have any need of him; his voice is the same still, *I will that they behold my glory which thou hast given me,* till they are wafted from hence to a full vision of it.

This is the true end of his heavenly life, and his living for ever there; *Seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them, Heb.* 7. 25; he lives solely to this purpose, to discharge this part of his priesthood for us. His advocacy is like his life, without end; as he died once to merit our redemption, so he lives always to make application of redemption. He would not answer the end of his life, if he did not exercise the office of his priesthood. It would not be a love like that of a God, if he did not bear his people continually upon his heart. He was the author of our faith by enduring the cross, and the *finisher* of our faith, by *sitting down at the right hand of God, Heb.* 12. 2. He will be exercised in it as long as there is any faith to be finished and completed in the world. His oblation was a transient act, but his appearance in heaven for us is a permanent act, and continues for ever. His mediatory glory is not consummate, though his personal be: he hath yet a mystical self to be perfected, a fulness to be enriched with; he cannot be intent upon this without minding the concerns of, and putting up pleas for his people, for they are one with him; *The fulness of him that fills all in all, Eph.* 1. 23.

There can be no cessation of his work, till his enemies be conquered, and his whole mystical body is exalted in glory. If he had finished this part of his function, we should have had him here again before this time with all his train of angels, to put an end to the present state of things; as the high priest staid no longer in the holy of holies than was necessary for the atoning their sins, expecting the felicity

of an acceptation, that he might bring the welcome news of it to the people that waited without. As soon as he hath reduced all the elect to an happy state, he will come again, for the *heavens receive him* only till the *restitution of all things* is completed, *Acts* 3. 21, and then *he shall come with a shout*, 1 *Thess.* 4. 16, all the angels in heaven triumphing and applauding the accomplishment of redemption. It is necessary it should be so,

1. Because it is *founded upon his death.* As his oblation is of eternal efficacy, so his advocacy hath an everlasting virtue. It is an eternal redemption, *Heb.* 9. 12, and therefore an eternal intercession. This the apostle signifies in the text by arguing from his propitiation to his advocacy: he is at present an advocate with an uninterrupted plea, because he is at present a propitiation in the efficacy of his passion. There was an end of his actual suffering when he expired, but no end of the virtue of his sacrifice, and therefore no end of his intercession, which depended not upon his death simply considered, but upon the value of it: it is in the virtue of this he pleads; since the virtue of his blood is perpetual, the plea grounded upon that virtue, and which is nothing but the voice of his blood, is of the same duration. There can be no end of the intercession of his person, till there be an exhausting of the merits of his death, the one must fail in its strength before the other cease in its plea: his blood must be a speechless blood before he can be a silent advocate. As the continual sacrifice typified the continual virtue of the Redeemer's death, so the perpetual burning incense signified the perpetuity of his intercession; and no less was signified by the sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy-seat, which was not wiped off, but remained there, as a visible mark, and remained as a continual solicitor for the continuance of grace and favour to the people.

2. The exercise of this office must be as *durable as*

the office itself. His priesthood is for ever, therefore the act belonging to his priesthood is for ever. He was more particularly constituted an high priest *after the order of Melchisedec*, when he entered into heaven as a *forerunner for us*, *Heb.* 6. 20, where he abides an high priest continually, made so not *after the law of a carnal command*, *Heb.* 7. 3, or a command to be abrogated, but *after the power of endless life*, ver. 15, 16, and confirmed by the *oath of God a priest for ever*, ver. 21, and therefore exerciseth his function of a priest for ever: not of sacrificing himself, because he lives for ever, and cannot die again, but of interceding, since no other act belonging to the priesthood can be exercised in that glorious and endless state he hath in heaven, but this of intercession, which must be without intermission, because it is the only act of that office which he can perform.

It is not said he is a man for ever, but a *priest for ever*, which is a name of an office, and implies an exercise of the office. He is not called a priest for ever in regard of his life, but in regard of his function for which he lives: his mouth cannot be stopped by God, because he was constituted by the irreversible oath of God. God cannot deny himself, and destroy his own solemn act. He is a priest for ever without repentance on God's part, he must therefore perpetually mind his office, the neglect of it else would cause repentance in God for exalting him to so high a dignity, and be a reflection upon divine wisdom, to settle one in this excellent place that were too weak for it, or too careless in it, that should bear only the title and neglect the work; it would be a cause of repentance in God at the expending so much grace to no purpose. This advocate as he bears the name of priest, so he appeared clothed with a priestly robe; *He had a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle*, *Rev.* 1. 13; which was the habit of the high priest under the law. As he is an

everlasting priest, so he manages an ever-living intercession; he was too faithful in discharging his part on earth, to be negligent of performing his office in heaven; he did not embrace so great an honour to be idle in it, and neglect the work and duty that his place called for.

3. This was both *the reason and end* of his advancement. The intercession he made for transgressors was one reason why God would *divide him a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors, Isa.* 53. 12; this is alledged as one reason, among others there mentioned, of his glorious exaltation, which intercession is most evident to us in his last prayer, *John* 17, wherein he prays for all that should believe on him; and also upon the cross, when he prays for his murderers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, Luke* 23. 34. An act so pleasing to God, as to be the motive to give him the division of the spoil of the strong, cannot but be perpetual. Will Christ, who always did what was pleasing to God on earth, discontinue that which is so delightful to the bowels of his mercy? He cannot look upon his own glory, the robe he wears, the throne he sits on, the enemies prostrate at his feet, but he must reflect upon the reason of his present state, and be excited to a redoubling his solicitations for his people. He would be no longer glorious than he were an advocate. The superstructure cannot stand when the foundation moulders. Since he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, he cannot be unmindful of promoting the destruction of the one, and the perfection of the other. A perpetual action will be the result of these perpetual qualities; and being anointed a priest for these qualities, he will act as a priest for the glory of them, which can be no other way but by intercession.

It was *the end* of his advancement; *But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat*

down on the right hand of God, Heb. 10. 12. The antithesis is made between him and the legal priests, they stood at the altar every day offering the same sacrifices, but *this*, not *man* as it is in our translation, but rather to be supplied with *priest*, *this priest* having finished his part on earth, sat down for ever, viz. as a priest on the right hand of God, and never leaves the place: other priests *stood* as not having finished their sacrificing work, but were to repeat it again. This priest *sits* as having finished his sacrificing function, and having attained the glory due to his person. His sitting down is not mentioned only as a point of honour, but of office; he sat down as one that had offered a complete sacrifice in the nature of a priest, and sat down for ever to exercise his priesthood at the right hand of God; this verse, compared with the other, would not else have a full sense; and the words following second it, he sat down *expecting till his enemies be made his footstool*, ver. 13, expecting the full fruits of that sacrifice in the complete subjection of his enemies, and consequently the full felicity of himself and his friends; and all this time of expectation he is sueing out the promise of God to him, *asking that inheritance* which was assured him in the covenant between them, *Psa.* 2. 8.

This is the *reason* of his sitting down for ever, to exercise his priesthood for ever in the presence of the king and Judge of all the earth. He is always in the presence of the Father in the dignity of his person, and fulness of his merit, continually spreading every part of his meritorious sacrifice in the view of God. The high priest entered into the holy of holies but once a year, but this high priest sits for ever in the court in a perpetual exercise of his function, both as a priest and a sacrifice. And since his own sacrifice for sins offered on earth was sufficient, he hath nothing to do perpetually in heaven, but to sprinkle the blood of that sacrifice upon the mercy-seat. He is never out of the presence of God, and the infiniteness of his compassions may hin-

der us from imagining a silence in him, when any accusations are brought in against us. The accusations might succeed well were he out of the way; but being always present, he is always active in his solicitations; no clamour can come against us, but he hears it, as being on the right hand of his Father, and appears as our attorney there in the presence of God to answer it, as the high priest appeared in the holy of holies for all the people.

PART III.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST EFFICACIOUS.

The efficacy of it typified—Subject of prophecy—The intercessions of Christ always answered—The greatness of his person—Near relation to the Father—Special love of the Father—The nature of his pleas—Matter of them holy—Asks only what he has merited—What is agreeable to the will of the Father—The ground of his intercession—The persons for whom he pleads—The fruits of it before his death—After his death—The particularity of his intercession—What he intercedes for—For justification—Pardon—Sanctification—Strength against temptation—Persevering grace—Acceptance of duties—And finally for salvation.

THE Fifth thing is, the *efficacy* of this intercession. The efficacy of it is implied in the text, both in the person of our advocate, *Jesus Christ*, in his quality, *the righteous*, in regard of the work he had wrought on earth, *propitiation*, in the object of his intercession, and the *place with the Father;* he is an advocate to the Father, not only to him at a distance, but with him; the constant presence of a favourite with a king, of a princely Son with a royal Father, is a means to make his intercessions of force with him; he is an advocate, and he is constantly with the Father in

that capacity. A letter from a friend is not so successful as a personal appearance for gaining a suit. If his death were meritorious, his prayer must be so too, as being put up in the virtue of his meritorious blood; and though we are reconciled by his death, yet we are saved by his life, with a *much more, Rom.* 5. 10, not formally in regard of merit, for that was the effect of his death, but in regard of application of that merit, the end for which he lives, to render it efficacious to us, as it had been in his passion valuable for us. If he separated himself to death to procure it, he will employ the authority and dignity of his life to finish and apply it. As none offered so noble a sacrifice, so none lives a more powerful life. As when he was on earth, never man spake as he spake; so now he is in heaven, never did any man or angel plead as he pleads. *If whatsoever we ask in his name*, we shall receive, *John* 16. 23, surely whatsoever he asks in his own name, *will not be refused.*

1. This was *typified.** The strength of his mediation was signified by the horns, ordered by a special precept to be made upon the *four corners of the altar of burnt-offerings, Exod.* 27. 2, and also upon *the altar of innocence, Exod.* 30. 2. As the brazen altar signified the strength of his death, so the golden altar signified the excellency of his intercession, horns in scripture being an emblem of strength, power, and dignity. And perhaps his *feet of brass*, wherewith he is described, *Rev.* 1. 15, when he appears to John in a priestly garb, signifies his irresistible standing before God in the exercise of that office. Much more may it be said of him as it was of Jacob, as a *prince he hath power with God, Gen.* 32. 28, by his death and intercession, as well as power with men by his Spirit, and prevails in all when he pleases.

2. It was prophecied of Christ, *Thou hast given*

* Lightfoot, Temple cap. 34. p. 198, 199.

him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips, Psal. 21. 2. This Psalm seems to be a comment upon part of the second Psalm, or rather a dialogue between Christ and the Father. Christ speaking ver. 1, and the Father promising him a full victory, ver. 8, which is a prophetical triumph of the church after the victory gained by the passion of Christ. And of the Messiah, the Chaldee and some of the Jews understand it. The expressions in the Psalm are many of them too illustrious to be meant of David, as *length of days for ever and ever*, ver. 4, which cannot be understood of David in his royalty as a mortal man. God had given Christ the right of asking, and grants him whatsoever he asks, he bestows upon him whatsoever he desires, and refuses nothing that he sues for. The good of his people is the desire of his heart, and the request of his lips, and nothing is refused that his heart wishes, and his lips move for. This of the efficacy of his intercession is the salvation he rejoices in, the pleasing and favourable countenance of God is that which makes him exceeding glad. He would have little contentin the rest of his glory, without this power of prevalency with his Father.

Since his intercession for his church is for his own mystical glory, it must be successful, or his own glory would be in part defective, since it is linked with that of his church, which is yet behind. As Christ *glorified* the Father, so the Father is reciprocally to *glorify the Son*, *John* 17. 4, 5, which is by giving him a power of asking, and engaging himself to a facility of granting. A promise of granting was annexed to the *command of asking*. *I will give*, *Psal.* 2. 8, he should not be so ready to request as the Father would be liberal to bestow. He was promised a mighty encouragement, till he had *set judgment in the earth*, and wrought a perfect deliverance for his people, *Isa.* 42. 4. It is to this contrite person, that he would look

perpetually favourably, *Isa.* 66. 1, 2. It is that person by whom the ceremonial law was to be torn in pieces, to whom God promised to look.

3. God never *denied* him any request which he put up upon the earth for the divine glory, and his people's good, and Christ himself acknowledges it, *I know that thou hearest me always*, *John* 11. 42. He did but groan in his Spirit without moving his lips, ver. 38, and how soon did his groans rise into hallelujahs, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me*, ver. 41; as soon as ever he sighed he had an occasion of praise. He was heard in all his petitions in the world, *Heb.* 5. 7, εἰσακουσθείς, heard to purpose, while he was in the days of his flesh encompassed and pressed with the infirmities of our nature; much more will he be heard in the days of his glory. He was not indeed heard for himself at the time of his suffering, so as to have what he begged formally granted; for in that prophetic Psalm, *Psal.* 22. 3, he complains that he had cried all the day, and God heard him not; his prayer that the cup might pass from him was in specie denied him; that prayer proceeded from a natural fear and horror of an accursed death as he was man, and is therefore said to be in the days of his flesh, when he had our natural infirmities about him; which was not also an absolute desire, but conditional, *if it were possible*, i. e. if it were not prejudicial to the glory of God, and the salvation of his people; yet in this also he was heard, for though he was not delivered from death he was supported in it; the death was to be suffered, and yet to be conquered, and afterwards his bloody passion was changed into a spiritual and glorious life by a resurrection. He was heard ἀπὸ εὐλαβείας, a deliverance from his fears and horrors was granted that he might with courage proceed on in his suffering.

Christ sometimes prayed as Mediator, and for things in order to his mediatory work; as when he prayed for the raising of Lazarus, that by so great a miracle his doctrine might be propagated, and the

faith of his disciples strengthened. *It was for the glory of God, and that they might believe that God had sent him, John* 11. 40, 42. In this Christ was never in the least denied, and to this, that speech of his success, *thou hearest me always*, refers. He utters this confidence and assurance in the hearing of the people, *that they may believe that thou hast sent me.* Thou hearest me always, when what I desire tends to the propagation of the gospel doctrine, and the faith and advantage of that people to whom, and for whom thou hast sent me. But in those prayers he puts up from human affections, and the innocent inclinations of nature, as that in the garden which he put up from a human sense, yet with a condition; and that upon the cross, which he puts up as a man subject to the laws of charity, though he was not formally answered, yet he was not absolutely denied, because he did not absolutely beg, but with a condition expressed, or implied.

It was not possible that cup should pass away from him according to the determination of things, and the predictions of the prophets, without a manifest alteration of purpose in God, breach of his word, and the utter ruin and devastation of mankind. And for that prayer upon the cross; *Father forgive them, they know not what they do, Luke* 23. 34; a condition is implied, viz. if they did repent and believe. It cannot be supposed that he prayed for their pardon without their repentance, whether they repented and believed, or no; and indeed the motive that he urges, implies a condition, *They know not what they do,* implying that when they came to be sensible, and to know with an inward penitent practical knowledge what they had done, that they had crucified the Lord of life, God would pardon them; which without doubt he would, according to the tenor of his own promise: but to consider rightly that petition of his in the garden, the refusing his request upon the account of the impossibility of the passing away of the

cup, does strongly conclude the efficacy of his intercession in heaven.

The reason why he was not answered, was, because such a grant had been inconsistent with the redemption of his people; and upon the same reason he will be answered in every suit in heaven, because he does every thing pursuant to the redemption, and full felicity of believers. He intercedes not there as he prayed sometimes on earth, as a man, but as a Mediator: if any thing were denied him on earth, because the refusal conduced to the advantage of his elect, it necessarily follows that he will have all things granted him in heaven, which are for the glory of God, the happiness of his people, and the fulness of their redemption. The same reason God hath now to allow his pleas, which before he had to refuse them. The necessity of his death for redemption was the cause of the refusal; the accomplishment of redemption, which is that he now intercedes for, cannot be denied him upon the same account, but he will always carry the cause he sues for.

As to that petition upon the cross, he was answered in it; many of those whose hands were red with his blood, had their hearts afterwards filled with repentance, and their heads crowned with pardon; and if his prayer upon the cross was so efficacious for some of his bloody persecutors, shall it have less force in heaven for his affectionate friends, since it is for *those that believe*, and *not for the world*, that he there intercedes? *John* 17. 9. If he were heard always, as himself asserts, before he had offered that sacrifice; much more in heaven, since he hath completed it, and is now suing out his own right, after he hath paid God his. If his prayers were so prevalent here, before he had accomplished his task of suffering; his intercession is much more prevalent above, since his sufferings are at an end which are the ground of his intercession.

Now this intercession must needs be efficacious, if you consider

1. His *person.*

(1.) The *greatness* of it, a person in the form of God, infinitely more excellent than all the tribes of angels; a person so great, that all the creatures in heaven and earth, and millions of worlds cannot equal him, they being less to him than a grain of sand to the glorious sun. It cannot be said of all creatures that ever were made, or of all that ever God can make, that in them dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily; as it is said of Christ, *Col.* 2. 9. He is not as the highest angel that must cover his face, and stand before the throne, but the man, *God's fellow, sitting upon the throne with him, Zech.* 13. 7. *Applied to Christ, Mat.* 26. 31. He is equal with God, and therefore cannot be refused by God. As his divine nature gave value to his satisfaction, so it gives efficacy to his intercession. His agonies in the garden, and his gaspings upon the cross were rendered by the greatness of his person mighty to reconcile us, and by the same, his pleas in heaven are rendered successful to save us. His humanity being in conjunction with his divinity, is the instrument that receives all its virtue from the deity. Though he does not intercede with God, as himself is God, because in that respect he is equal with God, but as Mediator in his human nature, yet his intercession as man receives a power and dignity from him as God, which causes the prevalency of it.

What there was of humility and supplication in his prayers upon earth, proceeded from his human nature: what there was of authority and efficacy in his mediatory interpositions, proceeded from his divine nature. He was bound to die as he was man, taking upon him our sins; he had a right to have his death accepted, as he was God assuming and sustaining our nature. It is a privilege due to the greatness

of his person to have his suit granted, as it is his duty as the high priest of his church, to present it in the holy of holies. The infinite worth of his prayers results from his divine nature, as well as the infinite worth of his passion; and being the intercessions of a divine person, they are as powerful, as his sufferings were meritorious.

In regard of this greatness of his person, God seems to stand in an admiring posture, at the approach of Christ to him. *Who is this that hath engaged his heart to approach unto me! Jer.* 30. 21, and presently the decree passes out for the confirming the fruits of his mediation in the fullest manner, and *ye shall be my people, and I will be your God,* ver. 22; taking them as his own propriety, and giving himself to them as their portion: nothing can be denied to so great a person. We know the suits of princes meet with greater sucess than those of peasants. In the same capacity that Christ performed his oblation, he manages his intercession; it was *through the eternal Spirit,* the strength of his Deity, he offered up himself to God; and so through the eternal Spirit, the strength of his Deity, he presents his supplications to God.

(2.) His near *relation* to the Father. As there was to be a respect to him in regard of the greatness of his person, so there was an affection due to him, in regard of the nearness of his relation. It is against the rules of justice to deny him his requests, because of his obedience, and against the rules of goodness to deny him his respects, because of his alliance. As he was from eternity, begotten by the Father and his particular delight, his person cannot but be very acceptable to God. It is upon this relation his consecration to his eternal priesthood is founded, which he exercises in this administration. *The word of the oath makes the Son,* i. e. priest, *who is consecrated for evermore, Heb.* 7. 28. Upon the

account of this relation, he had the *power of asking*, and the privilege of obtaining. *Thou art my Son, ask of me, Psal.* 2. 7, 8; it is this relation enters thee into this honour and glory; this prerogative had not been granted but as thou art my Son; and when he went into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us, he was entertained as a Son-priest; not only as a priest in relation to us, but as a Son in relation to his Father. *We have a great high priest that is passed into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, Heb.* 4. 14; and the text implies that he manages his advocacy in heaven with God as a Father, rather than with God as a judge; *advocate with the Father.*

He appeals to God in heaven under the title of a *Father*, as God considered him in all his expressions to him in the world as his Son; *This is my Son in whom I am well pleased, this is my Son, hear him;* carrying himself in all ways of paternal tenderness to him while he was upon earth, which cannot but be as strong now he is in heaven; he always considered him in the capacity of his Son, as well as our surety. As Christ was placed in this office as a Son, so he manages it as a Son; in the same capacity he was placed in this function, he exercises this office. Now what can render his intercession more efficacious than his relation? If Moses, a man, could screen a people from divine anger, and cool the wrath of a provoked God by interposing between God and the offenders; so that God should say to him, *Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against this people, and I may consume them at once, Exod.* 32. 10, and when Moses would not silence his cry, God at length would silence his wrath, ver. 14; if Moses, who was dignified only with a glorious title of his *friend*, with whom he spake *face to face*, had so great a power, how forcible must be the interposition of that person, who hath the more illustrious title of that of his Son? What suit can be cast out of the court that is presented by

a beloved Son, of whom he hath signally pronounced that *in him he is well pleased*, and well pleased with whatsoever he does?

Denials would be an argument of *displeasure*, not of a well-pleasedness; it would then be a Son with *whom I am displeased*, if any plea he makes be rejected as invalid. To whom should he grant any thing if he refused his Son, and his Son upon the same throne with himself, and put a slur upon him in the face of the whole host of heaven? If an earthly father knows how to give good gifts to his children that ask him, a heavenly Father does much more, and most of all to an only-begotten, and only-beloved Son, for whose sake he loves all his other children. It is a consideration that discovers the sincerity and tenderness of divine mercy. Had not God intended to hear him in all his requests for us, he would never have appointed one so nearly allied to him to plead our cause; one that he could not deny without some dishonour to so near a relation, and a reflection upon his own affection, as he might have done to some inferior person: God would not love his Son according to his own greatness, if he did not express it in the most signal marks of his favour.

(3.) The *special love* God bears to his person for what he hath done in the earth, and doeth yet in heaven. Could there have been any increase of the fatherly affections to him, his person had been more endeared to God after he had performed so exact an obedience; after he had triumphed over the enemies of his Father's honour, he might challenge as a reward the most sprightly sparklings of his Father's affection. What could hinder the grant of his suit, when the flames of that wrath in his Father's breast, which was an hinderance to any request, were quenched? Since justice was silenced, no other voice could be heard but that of tenderness and love, which was the spring of that power he gave him after his conflict, *power in heaven*, as well as *in earth*, *Matt.* 28. 18,

which may comprehend a power with God, as well as a power over angels; a power with God, not over God. Though the relation of a Son be endearing, yet, when the quality of obedience is added to the dearness of that relation, it enlarges and inflames paternal affection, and renders the Father more inclinable to grant any request that is made to him by such a person: as a king will listen more to the petitions of a son who hath done him signal service, and brought by his achievements a renown and honour to his name and government, than to a son barely in the relation of a child, without testifying the same affection and obedience in such eminent enterprizes.

If the Father had so special a care of Christ in the management of his office in the world, as to *uphold him in his arms*, * and support him in the depth of his misery; much more delight hath he in him now in heaven, since he hath brought that honour to him, that no created men or angels were ever capable to offer him. He will not be insensible of so great an obedience, or stain that glory he hath given him for it, by denying any thing he presents to him. How can God express a greater affection to him, than by committing the government of the world into his hands? And as the apostle argues in our case, *Rom.* 8. 32, from his delivery of his Son up for us to an assurance of the free gift of *all things* else, so it may in this, since he hath put the sceptre for a time into his hands, and from a boundless affection invested him in the government of the world, how shall he refuse him any thing in the confines of it; since he hath during this state of things committed all judgment and power or rule to him? *John* 5. 22. If his intercession upon earth for transgressors was a motive to God to clothe him with so great a glory, as hath been before mentioned from *Isaiah* 53. 12, his intercession

* As Sanctius saith the word אתמך signifies, Isa. 42. 1.

in heaven, every way as delightful to him, would excite him to confer a greater glory on him, were it possible for him to be elevated to a throne of a higher pitch. The one hath as mighty an influence upon his affections as the other, and there is the same reason of both.

There is an intimate union and an affectionate communion between the Father and the Son in heaven in regard of this advocacy; *Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, John* 14. 11, which he speaks upon a discourse of his ascension, ver, 2, 3, and to encourage them to ask in his name after his going to the Father, ver. 13. Believers have not only an advocate with the Father for them, but the person that was offended is now united to them in their advocate by an indissoluble league, and communion, and unalterable affection. And as whatsoever we ask in his name, should be *that the Father might be glorified in the Son,* ver. 13; so whatsoever Christ sues for is for the same end, which must needs in the very act of it fix him more strongly in that affection, which was due to him upon the account of his eternal alliance and his unspotted obedience.

2. It must needs be efficacious in regard of the pleas themselves, *the matter of them.*

(1.) The matter of his plea is *holy.* It is as was said, that the Father might be glorified in the Son in regard of his holiness and righteousness, and it is included in the text, by the epithet *righteous,* Jesus Christ the righteous, righteous in his person, righteous in his office as an advocate, both in the pleas he makes, and the manner of managing them. He is *holy, and harmless, and undefiled, as an high priest, Heb.* 7. 26. All his petitions are as himself, unspotted, his suit is as holy as his nature; if there be no guile in his mouth, there can be no iniquity in his plea. Our prayers are of themselves rejected because of their impurity. Christ's intercession is accepted because of its perfection. If a sinful Jacob prevailed

with God, much more must a perfectly holy Jesus, presenting nothing to God but what is becoming the purity and mercifulness of his own nature to grant. If his blood were *without blemish*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 19, his intercession must be without spot, because the one is the sole foundation of the other.

(2.) It is nothing but what he hath *merited.* He does not desire as a bare supplicant, but pleads in a way of right and justice. What he sues for is due to him from God's truth because of his promise, and from God's righteousness because of his merit. So that his suit is put up *ratione meriti, ratione juris,* he intercedes for no more than he hath purchased, and may demand as a due debt. It is necessary God should render what he owes unto that person that hath merited of him, he would be unrighteous if he did not, or put a note of insufficiency upon the sufferings of his Son. What he pleads for in heaven, is nothing but what he sued for on earth, *John* 17. 4, 5, upon the account of his glorifying his Father, i. e. rendering to him what was due by agreement between them; no doubt but the same argument is used by him in heaven, the matter of his plea is what he hath merited, viz. pardon of sin, sanctification, continuance of justification, all which he sued for in that chapter.

The Father hath *acknowledged* it already a just demand, for by his raising him from the dead, he hath given his approbation of all the acts of his life, not only to his death whereby he merited, but to his prayers whereby he supplicated for those things which he now solicits for in heaven, upon the account of the glory he did by his incarnation and passion bring to God. No plea can prevail against him, since he hath conquered his enemies, wiped out the guilt of sin by his sacrifice, condemned sin in the flesh, led captivity captive, and all this not by a mere strength but by a legal right, having satisfied the rigours of the law, prevailed at the tribunal of justice, all which

God hath subscribed to, by setting him at his *right hand far above principalities and powers, Eph.* 4. 8. Yet in as legal a way as he merited it, he might sue out the fruits of his merit. Shall he not much more prevail at the throne of grace by his intercession, since the mouth of justice, which gave life and strength to all suits against us, is perfectly stopped by the merit of his death? It hath nothing to except against the issues of mercy upon the perpetual pleading of that merit; what he does sue for is rather short of, than outweighs his merit. An infinite merit deserves infinite blessings, but all the blessings he solicits for are finite in themselves, though proceeding from infinite grace, and purchased by a payment of infinite value. God cannot be unjust to detain the goods and the price paid for them; Christ must have his death and sufferings given back again and uneffected, which is impossible, or else have the fruits of his death given to him and to those for whom he suffered.

3. Whatsoever he pleads for is agreeable to the *will of his Father*. The will of Christ, whereby he intercedes, is the same with the will of the Father with whom he intercedes; and when the will of an eternal mercy, and the will of an infinite merit, meet together, what will not be the fruit of such a glorious conjunction? As on earth he did nothing but what he saw *the Father* do, *John* 5. 19, 20, so he intercedes for nothing but what he knows the Father wills. What he did on earth was not without, but with his Father's will, what he does in heaven hath the same rule. As they were joined in the counsel of reconciliation and peace, which was *between them both, Zech.* 6. 13, so they are joined in the counsel of advocacy and intercession, which is between them both, the one as the director the other as the solicitor. Their wills are in the highest manner conformable to one another, and the will of the Father as much known by the soul of Christ in heaven, as it was on earth.

He asks nothing but he first reads in the copy of his Father's instructions, and considers what his will was. He reads over the annals of his Father's decrees and records, he does nothing but what he sees the Father do, he takes the copy of all from his Father, and whatsoever Christ does, the same does the Father also.

They have but *one will* in the whole current of redemption, so that he can plead nothing in regard of the persons for whom he appears, and the good things he desires for them, but it is according to the will of God. When he came into the world, he came *not to do his own will*, i. e. only his own will, but *the will of him that sent him;* and when he returned he went up not to do his own will, but the will of him that accepted him. The persons were given him by God for the ends which he intercedes for, the words Christ gave them, were first given him by God, and this *will of God*, and his people's receiving his words, he urges all along as an argument for the grant of his prayer, *John* 17. 8, 9. His intercession is in some sort a part of his obedience as well as his passion; by his obedient suffering he learned a further act of obedience, *Heb. 5.* 8, which could not be practised here, but in heaven. The apostle seems to refer this obedience to that part of his office as high priest in heaven after the order of Melchisedec, which he discourses of in that chapter.

His whole advocacy is but pursuant to that command given him by his Father, of losing none of those that God hath given him, but *raising them up at the last day*, *John* 6. 39. What he does in heaven is in a way of obedience to this obligation, and conducing to this end. There is not an answer of prayer which is the fruit of his advocacy, but the design of it is that *the Father may be glorified in the Son, John* 14. 13. As he glorified his Father on earth by his suffering, so he glorifies the same attributes by his intercession in heaven; it is for the glory of divine grace

that the one purposed, and the other acted, *Eph.* 1. 5, 6. If he gives blessings for the glory of his Father, he then in his suit urges the glory of his Father as an argument to obtain them. God must then be an enemy to his own glory, if he be deaf to his Son's suit; and since the advocate's plea is suitable to the Father's will, he cannot reject the will of his Son without offering violence to his own will. They are both one in will, and one in affection. His human will cannot desire any thing in opposition to the divine: though he desired the passing away of the cup here, which was not agreeable to the divine will, yet it was without any sin, because with submission to the divine will; but since he is stripped of our infirmities, and hath no furnace of wrath any more to suffer in, there cannot in his intercessions be so much as a conditional dissent from the divine will.

What Christ acts now, is upon that foundation which he laid here according to God's instructions. Christ had not come had not God sent him, the world had not been reconciled had not God employed him upon that errand; the whole plot was laid by him, it was his own purpose: should God deny any thing which was founded upon this his will, he would be mutable and deny himself, deny his own act and deed in denying the fruits of that work, which was designed and cut out by himself. The intercession of Christ concurring with the eternal design of God, with his will, with the good pleasure of it, and being for the glory of his grace, he must be beloved in, and for that very act of mediation, and consequently prevalent in it. To conclude, it was God's will to make any of you children, and he took a pleasure in purposing and effecting it, *Eph.* 1. 5, and will he stop his ears, when the wants of those children are presented to him for supplies by their mighty advocate, who acts nothing but what is agreeable to the eternal pleasure of his Father's will?

3. In regard of the foundation of his intercession,

his death. His intercession must be as powerful as his satisfaction. As he was a mighty surety for the discharge of men's debts, so he is a mighty intercessor for the salvation of men's souls; because his intercession is in the virtue of his satisfaction: he is an advocate, but by his propitiation, both are linked together in the text. His intercession being founded upon his death, his death, may as soon want its virtue as his intercession its efficacy. If his blood is incorruptible, which must be concluded from the antithesis; *We are not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 18: if his blood be incorruptible as being precious in the eyes of God, his intercessions are undeniable, as having an equal value in God's account. If his blood hath the same virtue now, which it had when it was first presented to God, his pleas must have the same virtue with his blood; as the one was owned, the other cannot be refused.

There is a necessary connexion between the perfection of the one, and prevalency of the other. If his sacrifice be perfect, his plea upon it must be prevalent; if his plea be not prevalent, it must conclude the imperfection of his sacrifice. A fiat must be set upon all his petitions, since he hath finished his passive obedience. What greater rhetoric can there be in the tongues of men and angels than in the tongue of Christ? Yet all his eloquence cannot be so powerful, as that of his gaping wounds. His blood hath the same efficacy in heaven that it had on earth, it speaks the same things, and must meet with the same success. His merit must be deficient before his intercession can be successless, and his blood will not want a voice while his death retains a satisfactory sufficiency. Having by his bloody obedience silenced justice, that it cannot put in any exception, he hath nothing to do but to solicit mercy, prone enough to bestow all good upon those that love him and believe in him.

4. In regard of *the persons* he intercedes for. They

are those that are the special gift of God to him, as dear to the Father as to Christ. *They are thine, John* 17. 9, thine as well as mine, thine before they were mine, thine in purpose, mine by donation. There is a likeness in the love the Father bears to his people, to that love which he bears to Christ. It is the argument Christ himself uses for the grant of what he desired in that intercessory model; *That the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me;* not that the Father might have a rise for his affection, but an occasion for the manifestation of his affection in the view of the world. And though Christ prays the Father, yet he intimates how easily his prayer for them would be granted, because, saith he, *the Father himself loves you; At that day you shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me, John* 16.26,27. Do not think the Father is so full of revenge that he must be earnestly pressed to be merciful to you, I do not say I will pray the Father for you, he of himself is inclinable to embrace you with the tenderest affection; he hath for your love to me a particular kindness for you. It is as if a favourite should say, I will intreat the king for you, but I need not; for he bears you such an affection because you are my friend, and belong to me, that he will from his own inclination be ready to do you all good.

Christ does not here deny his intercession for them, which before he had promised them, but would have them in their dependence consider not only his suing for them, but fix their mind upon the Father's love to them, and assure themselves there is nothing but they may expect from his immense bounty and infinite affection. The Father himself loves you, in the greatness of his majesty: he hath as deep a stamp of affection to you as I myself have, and as you know I have manifested to you. The persons he intercedes for are those whom the Father loves, those whom the Father hath given him, those whom God hath justified,

those for whom himself is a propitiation, those for whom he *died and rose* again, *Rom.* 8. 33, 34. since they were the persons for whom he was intended as a sacrifice, and for whose good his glorious resurrection and exaltation were designed; there is no doubt but his intercession shall be accepted for them. When the love of the Father to the advocate, and his love to his clients, meet together, what a glorious success must be expected from such an intercession!

5. It is evidenced by *the fruit of it,*

1. *Before* his sacrifice. The text intimates this. As he was a propitiation for the whole world, i. e. for all ages of the world, so he is an advocate in all ages of the world. How could the execution of God's vengeance upon the world for sin at the first commission of it have been prevented, but by the interposition of the Son of God? He interposed then by virtue of a promise to offer himself a sacrifice, he interpose now by virtue of his actual performance. If it were so prevalent as to support the world for so many ages, in the midst of that abundance of impurities which should overflow it, and to save those that should believe in a promised Messiah: it is much more powerful to save those that believe in a sacrificed and conquering Messiah. For as he was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, so by the same reason he was an advocate pleading from the foundation of the world. The credit of his plea is the same with that of his passion; as he was a sufferer by promise from the foundation of the world, so he was an intercessor by virtue of that promise: * there is the same reason of his intercession upon the credit of his future suffering, as there was for the pardon of sin upon the credit of his future passion.

Those that were saved before, were saved upon the account of his life as well as we; as they were reconciled by his death as well as we. For God made not several ways of salvation, one for him, and

* Ursin.

another for us. They were *saved by faith*, *Acts* 15. 8, 9, 11, by the same grace, by the same grace of Christ: and his future death being a sufficient ground from the foundation of the world for the pardon and salvation of those that believed in him, because it was not possible, in regard of the greatness of his person, and faithfulness to his trust, that he could fail in the performance of the condition required of him, and God knew he could not; and besides his own stedfast resolution, and his ability to accomplish his undertaking, God having given him promises of his omnipotent assistance; upon those accounts, Christ might with confidence be, even before his coming, a powerful advocate for those that laid hold upon the promise by faith. Though he was not actually installed in all his offices, yet he exercised them, if I may so speak, as a candidate; as a king he ruled his church, as an angel he guided his Israel, as a prophet he sent the prophets of the old testament, and revealed his will to them.

So though he was not a perfect priest, till he was a propitiation for sin by the oblation of himself as a grateful victim to God, because propitiation could not be made without blood, yet upon the account of the promise of his suffering he did exercise that part of his priesthood, whereupon the sins of many were pardoned. God was then a pardoning God, and a God blotting out iniquity; and whenever Christ interposed himself for his people, he was answered with comfortable words, *Zech.* 1. 13. And though it be said that Christ upon his ascension went to *appear in the presence of God for us*, *Heb.* 9. 24; this excludes not his former intercession in heaven. He tells the disciples that he went to heaven to *prepare a place* for them, yet the place is said to be prepared *before the foundation of the world*, *Matt.* 25. 34. He interceded before as a promiser, he intercedes now as a performer; and if his intercession then was graciously answered with comfortable words,

his intercession now hath a ground to meet with a no less acceptable entertainment.

2. *After* his sacrifice, in the first fruit of it, the mission of the Holy Ghost. God gave a full proof and public testimony of the vigour of his interposition in that abundance of the Spirit, which he poured forth upon the apostles at the day of Pentecost, and in sending the same Spirit to dwell in the hearts of believers; and the gracious operations of this Spirit in the hearts of men are infallible evidences that his intercession is still of the same force and efficacy. He had acquainted his disciples before, that he would *pray the Father, and he should give them another comforter, John* 14. 16. We find not any prayer of Christ for the Spirit upon record, while he remained upon the earth; he prayed for this Spirit after he went to heaven, for he seems to speak of it, as that which was to be acted by him after his going from them; and, saith he, the Father will send the comforter *in my name*, ver. 26, i. e. as a fruit and a manifestation of the great interest I have in him. This was so great a pledge of the prevalency of his advocacy, that a greater could not be given. As soon as ever he was at God's right hand, and had put up his petition for it, before he could be well seated in his throne, he received *the promise of the Holy Ghost, Acts* 2. 23, i. e. that Holy Ghost which had been promised, the richest gift next to that of his Son, that could be presented to men.

As the apostles had but little hopes after his death of his being a Redeemer, till they saw the truth of his resurrection; so they might have as little expectations of his mighty power in heaven after his ascension, till he gave them this token of it in the mission of his Spirit. The Spirit indeed was in some measure sent before, when he was an advocate designed, (the live-coal, which seems to be an emblem of the Spirit, was taken from the altar, a type of Christ; *Isa.* 6. 6.) but much more richly poured out when he was an advocate installed. The old testament had

some drops, and the new testament full effusions and showers. Though all the blessings of the new covenant are the fruits of Christ's death and intercession, yet the first fruit of it was the Holy Ghost, as the person, who by office was to convey to us and work in us the blessings of the covenant sealed and settled by the blood of the Redeemer; and therefore the promise of the Spirit is the first promise of the new covenant; *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, a new spirit will I put within you, and I will put my Spirit within you, Ezek.* 36. 25, 26, 27.

This was the first thing Christ solicited for, when he came to heaven, as the first blessing of the new covenant; and though he gave his disciples in his prayer, *John* 17, an essay, whereby they might well imagine what should be the substance of his petitions in his state of glory, yet he tells them not positively of any particular thing, but of this of the comforter: *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter.* This was the first boon he begged after his ascension; this was granted him, and with this the riches of heaven, and the blessings of eternity, to pour down upon us; which the apostle notes, *Tit.* 3. 6, when he speaks of the shedding of the Holy Ghost abundantly and richly by the Father, but through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, as the choicest witness of the irreversible validity of our Saviour's intercession with the Father; so that we may as well conclude in this case, as the apostle does in a like case of the love of God; *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Rom.* 8. 32. So since the intercession of Christ hath been so efficacious for a gift of so great a value as the Holy Ghost, wherein the gift of whatsoever was great in heaven was virtually contained, should it not be a warrant of assurance to us, that nothing will be denied to the solicitation of one, that in his very first request hath been so inexpressibly successful?

The Sixth thing is, the *particularity* of this intercession. Christ is an advocate for believers only, and for every one in particular.

(1.) For believers *only*: it is their peculiar privilege. It is not every name he takes into his lips, *Psal.* 16. 4; the names of those that hasten after another god, that own another god and another mediator; he would not offer their drink-offerings, or back them by any solicitation of his own for acceptance, he would deny them, and not assert them for his clients; nor be an high priest for them to offer any of their sacrifices; for those that believe not in him as Mediator, disown that God by whom he was sent for the redemption of the world; and therefore he disowns in his mediatory prayer the whole unbelieving impenitent world. *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, John* 17. 9; it is not agreeable to his wisdom to intercede for those that reject him. He is an advocate, but only for those that entertain him: he manages no man's cause that is not desirous to put it into his hands. Advocates manage the business only of those that enter themselves their clients. As he prayed not for the world on earth, so much less does he in heaven. No person hath an interest in his intercession, but he that by faith hath an interest in his satisfaction. Though his death was the remedy of our evils in a way of satisfaction to divine justice, yet the application of this remedy by the act of his priesthood in heaven, is only to those that repent and believe: in the text, *We have an advocate with the Father, we* that walk in communion with God; though he be a propitiation for the world, if any should take it extensively, yet he is not an advocate for the whole world, but for those that separate themselves from the world by believing on him.

(2.) For every believer *particularly*. The text intimates *we* have an advocate, every one of us. *If any man sin;* sin is a particular act of a person, and

this advocacy is for every particular sin, that the accuser can charge the criminal with. Advocates answer every particular charge against every particular person that is in the roll of their clients.

There is indeed an intercession for the church in general, in the time of its sufferings; so he interceded for mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah in the time of the Babylonish captivity, *Zech.* 1. 12. What the high priest did in a shadow, that does our high priest in the substance; when he went into the holy place, he bore the name of all the tribes of Israel upon his breast, *Exod.* 28. 29; and when our Saviour was preparing to sacrifice himself, and afterwards to ascend into the heavenly sanctuary; he prayed not only for those that were then with him, the whole church at that time, but the whole body even to the end of the world, which were then presented to God by him; *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, John* 17. 20; comprehending them all in one mass, in that intercessory prayer. And though he did not particularly name every one of them, yet since his divine understanding was furnished with omniscience, he knew them all distinctly in their successive appearances, and varieties of conditions in the world.

But his pleas in heaven are particular, according to the particular persons he solicits for, and the particular necessities wherewith they are incumbered. It was for Peter's person in particular he prayed when he was on earth, and for preservation of that particular grace of faith, to recover from under the temptation that was ready to invade him; *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, Luke* 22. 31, 32. Thee, his person, and thy faith, his case. He is an high priest over the house of God, *Heb.* 10. 21, and therefore over every member of the house and family, upon which the apostle founds his exhortation to every one to draw near with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith. Men pray in particular

for themselves and others, and Christ hears in particular ; *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us*, 1 *John* 5. 14. The Son of God, of whom he was speaking, hears us in particular, what we request in particular, and as he hears us, he pleads for us; he offers the prayers of all saints, *Rev.* 8. 3, and therefore of every saint upon every occasion with a particular plea and incense of his own; there is not one, but he keeps in remembrance, nor one request, but he presents to his Father, though not by an oral expression of every man's name and cause, yet by some distinct way of representation of them, and their wants to God, not so easily conceivable by us in this state of obscurity and darkness. As the devil is an accuser in particular, and cannot well be supposed to accuse all in the gross ; so Christ stands particularly to excuse them, and frustrate the indictment; they were given to him in particular, and he pleads for them as given to him, and as they were the propriety of his Father, *John* 17. 6, 9, 10, 11. God knows all his own in particular, and Christ hath a care of them in particular, Christ hath a charge of every one's person, he is to raise every one of them at the last day; he is to give an account of every one's case.

Again : he intercedes for those that *come to God by him*, *Heb.* 7. 25, but those that believe, come not in the gross to God by Christ, but by a particular act of faith in every one; and for every such comer, Christ lives for ever to make intercession for them. As he saves every comer to God by him in particular, so he particularly uses the means of salvation for them ; i. e. his intercession. He hath his life for ever, and his standing office of advocacy for ever, to make a distinct suit for every one upon his application to God by him, in the methods of that court where he exerciseth this function. And as every believer owns Christ in particular, so Christ will confess them by name plainly and clearly ; *I will confess his name be-*

fore my Father, *Rev.* 3. 5 ; every individual person will be named by him at last in his final sentence, and every individual person is named by him in his intercessory office; the name is confessed, the grace owned, and the merit of the Redeemer pleaded by him as an advocate before his Father. He is entered into the holy of holies, with all the names of those that belong to him upon his breast.

7. What Christ intercedes for. In general his intercession for believers is as large as the intent of his death for them; whatsoever privilege he purchased for them upon the cross, he sues for upon his throne. His intercession is the plea upon the account of his satisfaction, which was the payment.

He intercedes for the church in all its states and conditions. As soon as ever the news of the state of the world, and the condition of his church in it, is brought to him by the angels his messengers, *Zech.* 1. 11, 12, and the seventy years of captivity in Babylon were expired, he presently expostulates with God for the withdrawing his hand, and restoring their freedom. There is not any weapon formed against the church blunted, any design hatched against his people abortive, any seasonable rescue, any discovery and defeat of clandestine and hellish works of darkness, but they are the fruits of the diligence and industry of our advocate, and the benefits of his intercession. Let the prophane world look upon them as products of chance; let natural religion regard them as works of common providence; let us look upon them in their true spring, and their proper channel. Since God grants all things upon the account, and acts all things by the hands of a Mediator; all things flow to us through the intercession of Christ. Since all things were purchased for us by the sacrifice of Christ, he is an advocate to sue out what he merited for us as a surety; and since the mission of the Spirit was the first fruit of this office after his taking possession of heaven, it needs must follow, that all the works which

the Spirit began, and accomplishes in the soul, are fruits of it also. Therefore Christ said, *He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you, John* 16. 14, he shall take of mine, what is mine by purchase, what is mine by plea, what is mine by possession, and shew it unto you. The casting out the accusations of Satan from the court of justice, the casting them out of our own consciences, the pardon of our transgressions, the healing of our natures, our support against temptations, perseverance in that grace any have, and perfection of that grace any want, and at last, the perpetual residence of our souls with him, are procured by him as an advocate, as well as purchased by him as our surety.

(1.) *Justification.* He is an *advocate* in opposition to an *accuser*. In the *matter* of justification, the scripture represents God as a judge, and Christ as an advocate, pleading his blood and death; and when we come for justification, we come to God as the judge of all, listening to the voice of that blood of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; *Ye are come to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel, Heb.* 12. 23, 24. We come to God as a judge, and also *to the blood of sprinkling*, whereby he was appeased, of which *the spirits of just men made perfect* are a full testimony. To this blood we come, as it is a blood of sprinkling, in regard of its imputation to us; and as it is a speaking blood, in regard of its solicitation for us. Our triumphant justification by God, the apostle places upon this as the top-stone in the foundation; he first lays it upon the death of Christ, next with a rather, on the resurrection of Christ, and lastly, with an also upon his intercession; *It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us, Rom.* 8. 33, 34. Justification by God as op-

posed to condemnation, is ascribed to Christ, and to his intercession, as completing it, and putting the last hand to it.

* In the title of an advocate, there is respect to judicial proceedings; in the method of this proceeding, God is considered as the judge, man as the arraigned criminal; Satan is the accuser, *Rev.* 12. 10. *The accuser of the brethren,* who brings in the indictments of sin, pleads the righteousness of the law, solicits for judgment upon his accusation, and the execution of the curse due to the crime; our own consciences may be considered as the witness, and the law as the rule both of the accusation brought in, and of the judgment demanded. Christ is considered as an advocate in opposition to Satan the accuser, pleading the efficacy of his merit against the greatness of our crimes, and his satisfaction to justice by the blood of his cross, against the demands of the law, whereby the sentence of condemnation due to us, as considered in ourselves, is averted, and a sentence of absolution upon the merit and plea of our advocate is pronounced, and Satan cast out; and this upon an universal rule of righteousness, which suffers not that which is either a criminal or pecuniary debt to be twice paid. And in the text wherein it is said, *We have an advocate with the Father;* in case of sin, the Father is implied to be the sovereign judge, sin to be the crime, and Satan, though not mentioned, to be the accuser.

And this advocacy is there expressed to be, not for preventing sin, to which Satan excites us, but the pardoning sins committed, for which Satan accuses us, procuring an acquitting sentence for us from the Judge of all the earth, and indemnity from the punishment merited by our crimes, but stopped by his plea. As Christ appeared as an advocate against Satan when he would be Peter's winnower, *Luke* 22. 31,

* Mares contra Volkel, lib. 5. cap. 4. p. 8, 9.

32, so he appears as an advocate against Satan, when he steps up as our accuser. Now the intercession of Christ being opposite to the accusations of the devil, as the one would reduce us under the actual execution of the legal sentence, so the other hath a contrary effect, pleading for our justification by the application of his righteousness to us, and the acceptation of it for us, that we may stand clear before the tribunal of God.

Besides, Christ's blood speaks contrary, or puts up *contrary demands* to what Abel's blood laid claim to. The blood of Abel pierced heaven with its cries, and solicited a condemning vengeance on the head of Cain; the blood of Christ on the contrary must then cry for justifying grace on the person of every believer, otherwise it would not speak better things than Abel's blood did, but the same things; that called for punishment, this for pardon; that desired the death of the murderer, and this sues out the life of the rebel.

And further consider, since this blood is a speaking blood, it shows that the intercession of Christ is *managed in the virtue of his blood.* The same thing therefore which was the end of the effusion of his blood, is the end of the solicitation or elocution of his blood; his blood was shed for the expiation of sin, and bringing in an *everlasting righteousness*, that sinners might not be condemned, *Dan.* 9. 24; his intercession is for the application of this propitiation, that believers might be justified. Christ pleads the propitiation made by his blood, and accepted according to the rule of application by the faith of the repenting sinner.

Again: If Christ prayed for this on *earth, when he prayed for his glory*, he solicits for it also *in heaven when he prays for his glory; Father, glorify thy Son, John* 17. 1; he prays for his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of God; not only as it was his own personal concern, but as it was terminative

for his believing people; as ver. 2 intimates; and, ver. 10, he expresses himself to be glorified in them. Now as he died for the pardon of our sins, so he rose again for our justification; as he therefore desired his resurrection, so he desired it for the same end for which it was intended and promised, viz. our justification, and therefore virtually begged our justification in the petition for his glory. Now since he hath gained the request as to his own person, and as to a fundamental justification in his resurrection, and exaltation in heaven; yet it not being perfectly accomplished in all the ends of it, he moves still by his intercession for the actual justification of every one that comes, furnished with the gospel condition, to God by him.

Upon the whole we must consider, that though the propitiation made on the cross by the blood of Christ be the meritorious cause of our justification, yet the intercession upon the throne made by the same blood of Christ, as a speaking blood, is the immediate moving cause, or the *causa applicans* * of our justification. The propitiation Christ made on the cross, made God capable of justifying us in an honourable way; but the intercession of Christ as pleading that propitiation for us, procures our actual justification. The death of Christ accepted made justification possible, and the death of Christ pleaded by him, makes justification actual: righteousness to justify was brought in by him on the cross, and righteousness justifying is applied by him on his throne. Our justification was merited of God by his death, the merit of it acknowledged by God at his resurrection, and is conferred on us, when we believe, by his intercession. When a soul believes, Christ recommends him to God as a performer of the condition of the new covenant, and therefore pleads his death for him, and demands his actual admission into that favour

* As Illyricus phraseth it.

which was purchased; and thus by him as our living advocate, exercising his priesthood in heaven, we *receive the atonement*, *Rom.* 5. 10, 11.

(2.) Daily *pardon.* This is principally intended in the text; *If any man sin*, if any one of those that walk in the light, in communion with God and Christ, which cannot be without justification. *If any man sin, we have an advocate*, i. e. in case of sin after justification. We contract daily debts by committing daily sins, and there is not a day but we merit the total removal of justifying grace, that God should revive the memory of his former justice, and cancel the grants of his lately conferred mercy; and how could we avoid it, if Christ did not renew the memory of his propitiation before his Father, which first procured our admission, and is only able to maintain our standing? Every sin brings in its own nature an obligation to punishment, that is guilt; sin and guilt are inseparable: that which hath no guilt, is no transgression. This intercession of Christ answers the obligation which every sin brings upon us, as well as it did answer all the obligations at our first coming into the presence of God. It is upon every sin he exercises this office, and by his interposition procures our pardon thousands of times, and preserves us from coming short of the full fruits of reconciliation at first obtained by him, and accepted by us. He that had been stung a second time by the fiery serpent, must have had a fresh influence of the brazen one for his cure, as well as the first time he was wounded. As sin daily accuses us by virtue of the law, so Christ daily pleads for us by virtue of his cross; sin charges us before the tribunal of justice, and Christ by his intercession procures our discharge from the chancery of mercy.

(3.) *Sanctification.* As he is a priest set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high, he preserves the stability of the better covenant, the

new covenant, and perpetuates the fruits of it; justification in blotting out the memory of our sins, and sanctification in writing the law in our hearts, *Heb.* 8. 1, 6, 10, 12. He is the author of our first sanctification by his intercession, as the first fruits of it was the sending that Spirit, by whose powerful operations the soul is reformed according to the divine image; and he is the author of our repeated sanctification by the exercise of his advocacy. He is an advocate in case of sin, in regard of the guilt, that it should not remain upon our persons; in regard of the power, that the contagion of it should not seize upon our vitals; in regard of the defilement, that it might not remain, to unfit us for a fellowship with the Father and himself.

His intercession in heaven is a continuation of that intercession on earth, whereby he testified his desire, that we might be kept from the evil, while we resided in an infectious world; *Keep them from the evil, John* 17. 15, *and sanctified through his truth,* ver. 17, while we are upon an earth full of lying vanities. The end of his intercession is not for sharpness of wit, a pompous wealth, a luxurious prosperity, or a lazy peace; such things may be hurtful; but for faith, holiness, growth, wherein we can never be culpable. His intercession is not employed for low things, but for such as may fit us for an honour in another world. Mortifications of sin, and holiness of conversation, are therefore called *things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, Colos.* 3. 1, compared with ver. 5, &c. Things which come from above by virtue of that session of Christ at the right hand of God, and the office he there exercises, which the apostle explains to be a mortification of our members which are upon the earth, and since the great reason of his exaltation, is his *hating iniquity* and *loving righteousness,* the end of his exaltation and of his intercession in that state, is to manifest the same disposition in

the perfect expulsion of sin, and the full implantation of righteousness in us.

The same dispositions which animated him to a dying on the cross here, animates him to his intercession above, which is nothing else but a presenting his death, and a presenting not only his death, but all the motives which moved him to it, and the ends he aimed at in it. He is *manifested to take away sin*, 1 *John* 3. 5; manifested in his humiliation on earth, manifested in his exaltation in heaven to take away sin; sin in its impurity, as well as sin in the guilt. What he designed in the one, he designs in the other; the same end he aimed at in dying, he aims at in interceding. Since he is an advocate in the virtue of his blood, he is an advocate for the ends of his blood. He will not let sin continue in his members, which he came to wash off by his blood. As long as his love to righteousness and his aversion to sin continues in him, so long will he be acting in heaven, till he hath in the highest manner manifested to the full his affections to the one, and disaffections to the other, by utterly dispossessing the hearts of his people of what he hates both root and branch, and perfecting what he loves in all the dimensions of it. He does not only sue out our pardon, but sue out a grant of those graces which are necessary preparatories and concomitants of pardon. The end of his intercession is no doubt the same with that of his exaltation, which is not only for *forgiveness of sin, but repentance*, *Acts* 5. 31, which includes the whole of sanctification.

All the holiness believers have here, is a fruit of this advocacy; the communication of that power which subdues corruption flows from it. Christ by his intercession receives all from his Father, that as a king he may convey all necessary supplies to us. But we must consider, that though Christ does intercede for the sanctification of his people, yet it will not fol-

low that any of them are at present perfect and totally free from the relics of corruption. This is not intended by him in this life, any more than when he prayed for Peter, he desired not that he should be kept wholly from falling, but that his faith should be kept from totally failing. Sin is likewise suffered to continue in the best here, that men should not think, that the acceptation of their persons arises from their own works and holiness, but from the sweet savour of the Mediator's sacrifice continually presented in heaven. Yet perfection in grace will be the final issue of this advocacy. If grace should never be perfected, Christ would never be fully answered in his intercession, and so this office of his in heaven would want a manifestation of its true power and value.

(4.) Strength against *temptation.* We have an enemy industrious to entrap us, andwe have an advocate as industrious to protect us, who will either solicit for a reasonable strength to resist his invasion, or strength to improve it to our spiritual advantage, if he suffers the temptation to meet with some success in its attempt. Satan desires to sift us, *Luke* 22. 31. ἐξητήσατο, *he hath desired, or asked and begged with earnestness*, for so ἐξ being added to αἰτέω signifies, and our advocate is ready to stop the full proceedings of so fierce a solicitor. The seed of the woman, the mystical seed, shall overcome their enemies *by the blood of the Lamb*, *Rev.* 12. 11. By his blood shed upon the cross, by his blood presented in heaven, which cries for vengeance against the great seducer of mankind, and prevails to the casting him down. If strength against temptations were not procured by it, Christ's office of advocacy would lose a great part of its end. It was in kindness to us he was so advanced, not an advocate for himself personal, but for himself, mystical, i. e. for believers; in the text we have an advocate. It were little kindness to us, if we should lie grovelling in the dust, upon every inroad our enemy makes against us, and sink under every

shot that comes from the mount of his battery. It is this intercession that renders us either immoveable against his assaults, or after a foil victorious in the issue of the combat. Christ does not solicit for such a strength whereby a temptation may be wholly successless, but whereby it may not be wholly victorious.

He prayed for Peter against Satan that his faith might not fail, but he did not pray positively that the temptation might wholly fail. He implies by that expression, *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren, Luke* 22. 22, that he should fall so foully as that not a grain of grace should be visible in him, but he should appear like one in an unregenerate state, so that his return should be as a new conversion: so that though he prayed not for a prevention of his fall, yet he prayed for a recovery of him after his fall, by implying that he should be converted. His intercession is not always for keeping off a temptation from us, for he many times suffers fierce ones to invade us for gracious ends, both for his own glory and our good; but he solicits that a temptation may not utterly sink us, and mortify our grace. So that according to that model in the case of Peter, Christ sues not so much against a temptation, as for your faith: for if that keep up, a temptation will fall like a bullet against a brazen wall. He is content we should be in an evil world, but not satisfied unless we be preserved from the evil, or rescued from it after it hath assaulted us. And therefore a believer's courage hath a support in the greatest temptation. Christ opposes his petition against the demands of Satan; the first-born of every creature sets himself against the head of the wicked world; the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent, and the serpent himself, as he defends us against his accusations before God, so he succours us in his temptations of our own persons.

(5.) *Perseverance* in grace. This follows upon the other. His prayer for the not failing of Peter's faith,

is an earnest that the same petition is continually put up by him for all that believe in him. For since the scripture is written for our comfort, this part of it would be little for our comfort, if he were not as well concerned in the standing of every believer as of Peter, why should he wish him when he was converted to *strengthen his brethren*, if he had not intended it for a standing example of comfort to his church? The objection, that Christ did not intend to pray for the perseverance of any but Peter, would have destroyed all the arguments Peter could have used from this carriage of Christ to him for the strengthening of others. How could he strengthen his brethren in faith, if they had not been his brethren, in Christ's prayer, for their perseverance as well as he in his faith? It is principally for the continuance of our standing that his intercession is intended, if we may judge of what he does in heaven by that prayer on earth, which was the model of his intercession in heaven, in which this petition for his Father's keeping us *through his own name*, and keeping us *from the evil*, and furthering our progress in sanctification, takes up much of the time, *John* 17. 11, &c.

Certainly he hath the same language in heaven as he had then on earth, he would else leave out a main head in his petitions above, which this prayer below was intended to present us with a pattern of, and so there would be no agreement between his carriage in heaven, and the pledge he gave us on earth. It would have been but a fawning and dissembling affection to desire this in his disciples' hearing, and never solicit the same cause when he went out of their ken. No, our Saviour hath given evidence of a choicer and more durable affection than to give occasion to any to think, that he should be regardless of that in his glory, which he was so mindful of at the time of his approaching misery. What he was earnest for then, he is as desirous not to be defeated of now, and for

him to desire that his people should be kept from evil, and yet that they should sink under the greatest evil of a total apostacy, would argue the small credit his suit hath with the Father, and would shew that his advocacy is as impotent to secure us, as our inability to preserve ourselves. Since Christ does therefore concern himself for the perseverance of his own, his intercession is as powerful in that as in any other thing.

If it meet with a failure in any one part, we are not sure of its successfulness in any at all. If his merit be of an infinite value, his advocacy is of a sovereign efficacy. There is no question to be made, but those for whom he formerly merited, and those for whom he at present solicits, shall endure to the end, the gates of hell are as unable to prevail against the latter, as they were to weaken the power of the former. Did he by his propitiation procure our admission into God's favour in spite of the enemies of our salvation? And shall he not by his intercession maintain our standing in that favour, in spite of the enviers of our first admission? This is a choice fruit of the intercession of Christ. Upon this score he lays Peter's preservation from a total and final apostacy; *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, Luke* 22. 32; he does not say, Peter, there is such a principle in thee that is able to stand, thy own free will and the strength of thy grace shall bring thee off, and preserve thee from that precipice. No, *I have prayed*, there lies our security. The least grain of true grace, though as small as a mustard-seed, stands better settled by the support of Christ's intercession against the most boisterous winds of Satan, than the strongest grace can of itself by the power of free-will against the least breath of hell. The instability of our minds would shake it, and the relics of our corruption extinguish it without this.

(6.) *Acceptation* of our services. As this advocate preserves our graces, so he presents our services, and

by his intercession maintains life in the one, and procures credit for the other. He is as powerful a solicitor for the acceptance of our duties, as he was a grateful sacrifice for the expiation of our sins, and a mighty Redeemer for the liberty of our persons. Our prayers are both imperfect and blemished, but his merit applied by his intercession both purifies and perfects them. Our advocate by his skill puts them into form and language, according to the methods of the court of heaven, as an attorney does the petition and cause of his client, and by his interest procures a speedy hearing. Our works are no more the cause of the recording our petitions, than they are of the justification of our persons. Though our prayers are not entertained without some holiness in them, yet they are not entertained without a greater holiness than ours to present them.

When Christ tells his disciples that he had *ordained* them *to bring forth fruit*, he adds a clause to prevent their imaginations of meriting the answer of their prayers by the present of their fruits, that whatsoever they asked, they must expect only to obtain *in his name*, *John* 15. 16. As they are ours, though attended with never so much fruit, they may be rejected; as he makes them his by his intercession, they cannot be nonsuited. He is the altar upon which our sacrifices ascend with a grateful fume before the God of the whole world. *They shall be accepted upon my altar*, *Isa.* 56. 7. He is the altar that hath *much incense* to add or bestow upon the prayers of the saints, *Rev.* 8. 3, i. e. a mighty degree of merit and power of intercession to give a sweet savour to our spiritual sacrifices, that they may be *acceptable to God*, not by themselves, but *by Jesus Christ*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 5, alluding to the office of the high priest under the law, who after he had offered the sacrifice without the veil, took both his hands full of those aromatic drugs, of which the incense was composed, without the veil,

and put them in a censer of gold full of fire, and covered the propitiatory or mercy-seat with the fume of it.

Nothing that we can offer is agreeable to God, without it comes through the hands, and with the recommendation of our powerful advocate, so beloved by him. The fire he fetches from the golden altar makes them to fume up, and render a pleasing scent before the mercy-seat. He is an Aaron in this part of his priesthood in heaven; *Bearing the iniquity of our holy things*, *Exod.* 28. 38, when he presents himself in the sanctuary on high for the interest of his people. This he implies in the prophetic psalm, when he declares he *will not offer the offerings of those that hasten after another god, nor take their names into his mouth*, *Psal.* 16. 4; he intimates thereby that he presents the offerings of those that believe in him as the only Mediator, and pronounces their names with a recommendation of them before God, as such as are parts of his mystical body, such as have owned him, and performed the condition of faith, such persons *in whom is all his delight*. It is from this consideration of Christ's being passed into the heavens as a high priest, that the apostle exhorts the Hebrews not only to *hold fast their profession*, but to *come boldly to the throne of grace*, with an assurance of acceptance and obtaining grace in their necessity, *Heb.* 4. 14, 16. And indeed having such a friend in heaven, we may boldly venture to that throne, which his propitiation on earth, and his appearance in heaven, render a throne of grace.

(7.) *Salvation.* This is the main end of his intercession. He *saves* us *to the uttermost*, *Heb.* 7. 25, or, to all kind of perfection, noting the kind of salvation as well as the perpetuity of time; and this by interceding; thus the apostle's argument runs, he is able to save, because the end of his life is to intercede, and the end of his intercession is to save. The im-

mediate end of his death was satisfaction respecting God, the immediate end of his intercession is salvation respecting us. He lives there, to sue out for us the possession of that which he died here to purchase. We are therefore said to be *saved by his life*, as we are said to be reconciled by his death, *Rom.* 5. 10, not simply by his life, for no man is said to preserve another merely as he is a living man, but as his life is active for another in managing some means of preservation for him. Christ saves us by his life, i. e. by that life which he lives, which is a life of intercession. As he did not reconcile us simply by his death, but by his death as a sacrifice, so he does not save us simply by his life, but by his life as an accepted advocate. The expiation of our sins was made by him on the cross, and the happiness of our souls is perfected by him on his throne. He took our nature that he might die for us, and possesses a throne above that he might live to save us.

This part he managed in that model of his intercession on earth, *John* 17, after he had prayed for what was necessary for them during the length of their pilgrimage, viz. sanctifying grace, and preservation from evil, he puts forward in the upshot for the happy entertainment of them in heaven; *Father, I will that they be with me where I am*, ver. 24. When he comes to this period, he demands it in a way of more authority than what he had sued for before, to show that his desire would be utterly unsatisfied without the grant of this. All that which he had sued for before, was with respect to this topstone of salvation and glory. After this demand he concludes his prayer, as having no more after the completing of their happiness to beg for them. As after he had finished the task of his humiliation, and had ascended to heaven, he had no more need to pray for himself, so when he hath brought all his people to the pos-

session of that happiness with him, he leaves off any further pleading for them, because they are in the fullest ocean of felicity. Christ would be an unsuccessful advocate, and consequently an impotent propitiator, if any believer, after all his wading through the mire of this world, should fall short of a comfortable reception and mansion above.

PART IV.

THE IMPROVEMENT.

The subject an argument for the Deity of Jesus—The efficacy of his death—The infinite love of God to him—The impossibility of perfection in this life—Duration of the church—The sin of abusing the intercession of Christ—Of uniting others with him in the work of mediation—The misery of those who have no interest in him—The comfort of his redeemed—In the perpetuity of his intercession—In the efficacy of it—Their encouragement in prayer—Against the accusations of Satan—To be interested in his advocacy we must believe—Obey—Daily recourse to his advocacy—Affections in heaven—Glorify our Advocate.

I. LET us look to the information this subject affords us.

1. Here is an argument for the *Deity* of Christ. If he be a prevailing advocate for such multitudes of believers, preserving them in the favour of God by his intercession, it evidences his person to be infinitely valued by God, which would not be, if his person were not worthy of an infinite love, and he could not be worthy of an infinite love, were not his passion of an infinite value, and his passion could not mount to so high a value, were not his person in-

finitely valuable, for the worth of his death depends upon the eminency of his person.

Besides, as an advocate he presents every man's cause before the Father, and puts in for every one a memorial of his death to preserve them in a justified state, and maintain that grace which would else be destroyed by a deluge of corruption. He must needs be God, that knows every person in that multitude of those that sincerely believe in him, that hears all their petitions, and understands all their more numerous griefs and burdens, inward and outward sins, those inward agonies of spirit, those mental as well as oral prayers, and all those in those distant places where every one of those persons resides, and knows whether their supplications be in sincerity or hypocrisy. He that knows all those is endued with omniscience, and must needs be God. He could not be a sufficient advocate, if he did not understand every man's cause to present it before the judge of the world, and without omniscience he could understand little or nothing, he could only understand what is outwardly declared, not what really the cause is. He must depend upon the declaration of his client, as advocates do, and so be often deluded by false representations, as they are. He could not without omniscience take care of all his clients, to have so many clients whose cases to present every day would be his burden and perplexity, and render heaven a place of trouble to him, not of glory. Were he a mere man, it could not be conceived how it were possible for him, but how easy is all this to one possessed of a Deity!

2. Hence is a ground to conclude the *efficacy* of his death. His intercession is an argument for the perfection of his sacrifice. The virtue of his passion is the ground of his plea, and therefore if he had not perfectly satisfied God, he must have offered himself again, (*By once offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, Heb.* 10. 14,) and repeated the sacrifice before he could have begun his advocacy.

Had his death been destitute of merit, there had been no room for his appearance as a justifier of our cause at the throne of grace. He could not have been a prevailing pleader, if he had not first been an appeasing propitiator. His standing up as a solicitor for us had been of little efficacy, if the atonement he made on the cross, had not been first judged sufficient. The high priest must be punctual to the prescriptions of the law in the sacrifice without, before he could enter with the blood of it into the holy of holies. If our faith be shaken at any time, with the doubt of the validity of his death, let us settle it by reflecting upon his advocacy. This verifies the virtue of his passion more than all miracles that can be wrought in his name.

3. See the infinite *love* of God and Christ; of God that he should appoint an advocate for us. If we were left to ourselves, and our own pleas, our least sins would ruin us. There are daily sins would sink us to hell, were it not for this daily intercession. And this love is further enhanced in appointing not an angel, or one of the highest cherubims most dear to him, but his own Son, the best and noblest person he had in all the world, to this office of advocacy for a company of worms; one that is equal with himself in glory, and is equal with himself in the distinct knowledge of all our cases, better acquainted with all our burdens and grievances. How great also is the love of Christ, who when he was properly our judge, takes upon him to be our advocate, when he hath a mouth to condemn us, and a wrath to consume us, he binds the arms of wrath, and employs his tongue to solicit our cause, and procure our mercy! He is not only an advocate for himself, and the glory promised him, but for an unworthy sinner, for those penitents he hath yet left behind him in the world; he remembers them as well as himself. As Satan never appears before God, but he hath some to accuse, so

Christ never appears before God, but he hath some to defend.

4. How little ground is there to dream of such a thing as *perfection* in this life? If we stand in need of a perpetual intercession of Christ in this life, we have not then a perfection in this life, intercession supposes imperfection. Those that pretend to a state here totally free from sin, conclude themselves mounted above the need of any to interpose for them. It is in the case of sin that this advocacy is appointed; not in the case of sin unjustly, but justly charged; for it is not *if any man be accused of sin, but if any man sin* really. The interposition of an advocate always implies a charge against the client, but in the text it implies a charge that hath a true, and not a mistaken foundation. Sin is as durable as this world, because Christ's intercession endures to the end of the world; *He ever lives to make intercession*, i. e. till the end of this state of things. If believers did not sin after they were united to Christ, and justified, an advocacy for them would be of no necessity. The settling Christ in this office implies that God had no intention to render men perfect in this life. If we were arrived to such a state, we had no more need of Christ's further mediating for us, than the blessed angels have. After the restitution of all things, and the consummation of the elect, Christ no longer acts the part of a Mediator, but God shall be all in all.

Nor can it be said, that some may be perfect in this life, though all are not; and for those that are short of such a state, indeed the advocacy of Christ is necessary. There is little probability for this from the text. The apostle puts himself in the number, *If any man sin, we have an advocate;* not you, as excluding himself from having any need of it. The consideration of what apostle it was that speaks thus, would damp any presumptions of perfection. Was it not he that had the honour to lie in his Master's bo-

som, and to be blessed with the greatest share in the Redeemer's affections? That disciple whom he appointed to be the host and guardian of his own mother, the dearest thing to him, as man, he left behind him in the world; and the apostle, to whom he was resolved, and did afterwards make known the various revolutions in the church to the end of the world in the book of the Revelations? If any could be supposed to be settled in a sinless and perfect state in this life, he might; but he disowns any such eminency, and looks upon himself in that state, as to have need of entertaining this common advocate in his cause.

5. Hence it follows, that the church is as *durable* as the world. *We have*, is the time present, but it takes in the future ages; *He ever lives to make intercession for those that come to God by him;* there will always then, as long as the world endures, be some comers to God. If his intercession run parallel with the duration of the world, there will always be some in the world, whose necessities are to be represented by him to his Father.

6. If Christ be an advocate, the contempt or abuse of his intercession is a *great sin*. It is an abuse of it, when men presume upon it, to sin wilfully against knowledge, and then to run to him to interpose for their pardon. This is a profanation of the holiness of this advocate, as though he were settled in this office to beg a licence for our crimes, to sue for impunity to impenitence; when indeed they are sins of infirmity, not sins of contempt, without remorse, that he interposes for; *if any man sin;* and his interposition is to comfort us under our burdens, not to encourage us in our iniquities. Unbelief is also a denial of the sufficiency or necessity of his intercession, since it is a slighting of that propitiation which is the ground of it.

A total neglect of prayer is also a contempt of it. If there should be no service, he would have no matter to perfume by his obedience: we should

frustrate that part of his priesthood which consists in intercession, and render him an empty-handed priest, to be full of merit to no purpose. An unreasonable dejectedness in good men is no honouring of it; to walk disconsolately, as though there were none in the upper region to take care of us, and mind our cause. Hath Christ lost his power, his eloquence, his interest in his Father, is the value of his sufferings abated? Hath God utterly discarded the righteousness of his Son? Hath God repented of sending his Son to suffer? Are our Saviour's pleas distasteful to him? Is Christ, that was carried triumphantly to heaven, now of no account there? Or hath the Redeemer thrown off all thoughts of us, all care for us? One would think some of those things are happened, since christians walk so feebly, with heads hanging down, as if no person concerned himself above in their affairs: at least a stranger would admire to hear them talk of an advocate, and walk as dejectedly, as if there were none at all. It is dishonour also to it when men after sin betake themselves to vows or alms for their solicitors, and not to the sacrifice and advocacy of Christ.

7. If Christ be our advocate, it is a *dishonourable* thing to yoke saints as mediators of intercession with him. The Romanists tell us that Christ is the Mediator of redemption, but the saints are also mediators of intercession. Though to give them their due, they say, that the prayers of saints and angels for them, prevail not by the sole virtue of their own merit, but receive their spiritual validity from the merit of Christ. What need then of invocating saints, since their intercessions for us will do us no good, without the intercession of Christ, and his pleading his merit for us? None had authority to offer the incense upon the altar of gold, but he that offered the sacrifice upon the altar of brass. When the high priest went to burn incense in the holy place, he was attended with none of the people, nor any of the priests; not a man nor

angel appears with Christ in heaven as an intercessor to present the services of any. As they shed none of their blood for us, so have they no blood to sprinkle in heaven. Those that have no merit to purchase for themselves, have no merit to apply to others.

He only that hath satisfied for us, hath the authority to intercede for us. Christ only that is our Redeemer, can be our advocate. The glorified saints have been brought into heaven by his grace: not to receive our services but rejoice in his salvation: they are co-heirs with him in his inheritance, not co-officers with him in his function. To yoke him with saints, is to apprehend him very unmindful of his office, or lazy in his solicitations, that he needs a spur from those that are about him: It is to strip him of his priestly garments, and put them upon his inferiors; and it is as great a sacrilege to rob him of the honour of his advocacy, as to deny him the glory of his death.

The text forbids such an invasion; it intimates that the right of intercession belongs only to him who hath made the propitiation; but that was made by Christ alone, without any saints to tread the wine-press with him; and therefore the advocacy is managed by Christ alone, without any saints to assist with him at the throne of grace. Since they shed no blood to pacify the wrath of God for our sins, they have no right to present our prayers for acceptance at his throne. The apostle, *Heb.* 13. 7, when he speaks to them to follow their faith, had a fair occasion, had he had a knowledge of the truth of it, to mention it; he advises them to imitate the saints, not to invocate them. He proposes their example to them on earth, when he might as well have added also their intercessions in heaven: He had had as good a ground to wish them to present their prayers to them, which were glorified, if those spirits had been in a capacity to do them such a kindness: he would not have been guilty of such an omission, as not to have minded them of their duty, and increased their comfort, had

such a thing been known to him. And whence the assertors of this doctrine had the revelation, we may easily conclude, since those that were enlightened from heaven, never mentioned a syllable of any thing so dishonourable to the Redeemer.

8. If Christ be our advocate, how *miserable* are those that have no interest in him? He is an advocate for all that walk in communion with God, that walk in the light; those that walk otherwise, are under the condemnation of the law, not under the propitiation and intercession of Christ; they have the injured attributes of God, and slighted blood of Christ, to plead against them, not for them. If Christ did *not pray for the world* here, he will not plead for the world in heaven; *John* 17. 9. He is introduced in those prophetic psalms, praying that those that wish him evil, may be *confounded and put to shame*, *Psa.* 40. 14, and that the indignation of God might be poured out upon them, and his wrathful anger take hold of them, *Psa.* 69. 21, 24; and indeed at his first settlement in this office, the power of asking was conferred upon him, as well for the ruin of his enemies, as for the security of his believing friends. *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine heritance*, *Psa.* 2. 8, 9: and what follows? *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.* Breaking his enemies is a fruit of his asking.

Impenitent men are so far from having an interest in his intercessions for mercy, that they have a terrible share in his pleas for wrath. And himself solemnly publishes in his speech to his Father, that he *will not take their names into his lips, that hasten after another god*, *Psa.* 16. 4, by idolatrous services. If it be a misery to want the prayers of a Noah, Daniel, Job, or a Jeremiah, *Jer.* 11. 14, what a horrible misery it is to want the prayers of the Saviour of the world, and to have the pleas of Christ directed against them? As the blood of Christ speaks better things than the blood of Abel for those on whom it is sprinkled, so it speaks

bitterer things for all such as by unbelief and impenitence trample upon it. It is a mighty misery to want so powerful a patronage.

II. Use is of *comfort*. His design in uttering his prayer on earth, the model of his intercession, was for the joy of his people; *These things speak I in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves*, *John* 17. 13, that they might have a joy in his absence, in the assurance of his faithful managing their cause above, by remembering how earnest he was for them below; that this *joy might be fulfilled in them*, i. e. that they might have a full and permanent joy, as much joy proportionably in having me their advocate, as I have in undertaking and managing the office for them. We should draw forth the comfort of this function he exercises; as a propitiation he turned the court of justice into a court of mercy; and as an advocate he keeps it firm in that change he made by his passion. To this we may ascribe the firmness of the divine reconciliation, and the fruit of it, the *non imputation* of our daily sins. It is the top of our comfort that he is in heaven a pleader, as it was the foundation of our comfort, that he was once on earth a sufferer. There is not the meanest beggar that is a believer, but he hath a greater favourite to manage his cause with God, than any man can have with an earthly prince. It is a thousand times more comfort that he is an advocate in heaven, than if he were a king visibly upon earth. He is above to prevent all evils which can there only receive their commission, to procure all blessings which there only find their spring. What reason of discouragement, when we have one in heaven to be our advocate, one so acceptable to the Father, one that hath given such proofs of his affections to us, one that is both faithful and earnest in our cause, and one that it is no disparagement for the Father to listen to? What could comfort itself, says one, * wish more for her children, had she been our mother, than to

* Dr. Jackson.

have so great a person our perpetual advocate at the right hand of God? His death is not such a ground of assurance as this, because that is past; but when we consider how the merit of his death lives continually in his intercession; all the weights of doubts and despondency lose their heaviness, faith finds in it an unquestionable support.

1. There is comfort in the *perpetuity* of this intercession. He is as much a perpetual advocate, as he is a perpetual propitiation. Till there be a failure in the merits of the one, there can be no interruption in the pleas of the other. The blood that was sprinkled on the mercy-seat in the holy of holies, was not to be wiped off, but to remain there as a visible mark of the atonement. As the high priest went not into the holy of holies to look about him, and feast his eyes with the rarities of the place, but to perform an office for the people that staid without all the time he remained before the mercy-seat; so is Christ entered to *appear in the presence of God for us, Heb.* 9. 24, to appear all the time of his residence there. He is not silent, but is always pleading in the strength of his sacrifice for the benefits purchased by it. He hath, that I may so say, little else to do where he is, but to intercede. When he was in the world, and had a glory due to him to petition for, he does it not without intermixing more suits for his people than for himself, *John* 17. His love is not cooled by his being in heaven. There is little of his own glory behind to solicit for. His zeal and earnestness run in one channel for his people, and is more united.

He was dead, but his love did not die with him; he now lives, and his affections live with him, and he lives for evermore. *I am he that lives, and was dead, and behold, I live for evermore, Rev.* 1. 18. His life had little comfort without the end of his life. He lives in that nature wherein he died, he lives for ever, as well as he died once, in the office of a Redeemer.

He interceded for all believers when he was alive, *John* 17. 19. If it be a great comfort to have a stock of prayers going for us among our friends; it is a greater to have Christ praying for us, and to consider, he prayed sixteen hundred years ago, and hath never left pleading one moment since he sat down on his throne. Christ's power cannot be weakened, his eloquence cannot grow dull and flat, his interest is not decayed, the righteousness of God endures for ever, he repents not of his contrivances for man's salvation, he is to this day pleased with the interposure of his Son on our behalf; the laws of heaven are unchangeable, our advocate is in high esteem there, and his thoughts of us the same as ever they were.

2. There is comfort in the *prevalency* of it; the perpetuity assures us of the prevalency of it. If the appearance of the rainbow in the cloud be a memorial to God to withhold his hand from ever drowning the world, as he promised Noah, *Gen.* 9. 16, the suffering person of his Son being perpetually before him every moment of an endless eternity, will not suffer him to be forgetful of the covenant of grace, sealed by the blood of so great a person. He that remembered Abraham in the case of Lot, some time after Abraham had done praying, *Gen.* 19. 29, cannot be unmindful of those for whom he hath a perpetual solicitor before his eyes. Can any man lose his cause, that hath so powerful an advocate as a deserving Son with a gracious Father, who hath affection to us to enforce his plea, and interest enough in the Father, to prevail for our good? His prayers above are not less, but rather more prevalent, if any difference may be supposed, than they were here below.

As there were no sinful infirmities in his nature, so there were none in his prayers on earth, but there were natural infirmities, as hunger, thirst, sleep, which might give some interruption to the constancy of actual prayer; but there can be none in his inter-

cession, since all his natural infirmities were dropped at his resurrection. He is the watchman and advocate of Israel, that *never slumbers nor sleeps.* He pleads not as Moses for the Israelites, or as an Israelite for himself, but as the angel and head of the covenant. As by his sacrifice, so by his plea, he frees them from a state of condemnation. *Who is he that condemns? it is Christ that died, yea rather that makes intercession for us, Rom.* 8. 34. No blessing he pleads for, but we shall obtain: the Father can refuse him nothing; we cannot want help, till the Father has discarded all affection to his Son, and declares himself mistaken in the judgment he discovered of the greatness of his merit at his resurrection and ascension. Certainly if we shall have whatsoever *we ask in his name,* for ourselves, *John* 16. 23, he will obtain whatsoever he asks in his own name for us.

3. Hence arises comfort to us in *our prayers.* We cannot doubt of success, as long as Christ hath faithfulness. The office of the priests under the law was to receive every man's sacrifice that was capable of presenting one, and refuse none. Christ as an advocate hath it incumbent upon him to receive our spiritual sacrifices, and he does receive them, and present them with more mercy, because he transcends them in faithfulness and compassion.

We are many times dejected at the remembrance of our prayers; but the concern that Christ hath in them is a ground to raise us. We have an advocate that knows how to separate the impertinencies and follies which fall from the mouths of his clients; he knows how to rectify and purify our bills of requests, and present them otherwise than we do. How happy a thing is it to have one to offer up our prayers in his golden censer, and perfume our weak performances by applying his merit to them! Satan distracts our prayers, but cannot blemish Christ's intercessions. When we cannot present our own case by reason of diseases and indispositions, we have

one to present our cause for us, that can never be distempered, who is more quick to present our groans than we are to utter them. Besides, all prayer put up *in his name* shall be successful, *John* 16. 23. The arguments we use from Christ's merits are the same fundamentally upon which the plea of Christ in heaven is grounded, and if God should deny us, it were to deny his Son, and cast off that delight he expressed himself to have in the merit of his death; but God loves that mediation of his Son, and that this work of his should be honoured and acknowledged: and though we had no promise to have our own prayers heard, yet there is no doubt but he will hear the prayers of Christ for us, for *them he hears always*, *John* 11. 42.

4. Hence arises comfort against all the attempts and accusations of *Satan*, and the rebellion of *our own corruption*. He foresees all the ambushments of Satan, searches into his intention, understands his stratagems, and is as ready to speak to the Father for us, as he was to turn his back and look Peter into a recovery at the crowing of the cock. The devil accuses us when we fall, but he hath not so much on his side as we have. All his strength lies in our sinful acts, but the strength of our advocate lies in his own infinite merit. Satan hath no merit of his own to enter as plea for vengeance. When he pleads against us with our sins, Christ pleads for us by his sufferings, and if our adversary never ceases to accuse us, our advocate never ceases to defend us.

How comfortable is it to have one day and night before the throne to controul the charge of our enemy, and the despondencies of our souls, that Satan can no sooner open his mouth, but he hath one to stop and rebuke him, who hath more favour in the court than that malicious spirit, and employs all his life and glory for our spiritual advantage, who will not upon such occasions want a good word for us!

And as to our corruptions, he is in heaven to make up all breaches. His blood hath the same design in his plea, that it had in the sacrifice, which was to *purify us*, *Tit.* 2. 4. The difficulty of any cause does not discourage him, but honours both his skill in bringing us off, and the merit of his blood, which is the cause of our restoration. Upon every occasion he steps in to plead with the holiness of God, and pacify the justice of God for our greater as well as lighter crimes. While therefore we feelingly groan under our spiritual burdens, let us not be so dejected by them, as cheered by the advocacy of our Saviour.

III. Use of Exhortation.

1. *Endeavour for an interest* in this advocacy. It is natural for men to look after some intercessor with God for them. When the Israelites were sensible of their sin *in speaking against God*, they desired Moses to be their mediator; *Pray unto the Lord for us*, *Numb.* 21. 7. Behold here a greater than Moses to be the patron of our cause.

To this purpose, we must have a *sincere faith*. This is absolutely necessary for an interest in Christ's priesthood, *Heb.* 7. 24. It is only for *those that come to God by him*. He hath not a moral ability to save, or intercede for any but such; that is clearly implied; If *able to save those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them*, then able to save none else; it is restrained only to such. It is a foolish imagination to think Christ prays for unbelievers, because he prayed on the cross for those that murdered him,* there is a great difference between his prayer then, and his intercession in heaven. That upon the cross was as he was a holy man, and would both shew his own charity to his enemies, and set as a pattern of it to ours; but in his mediatory prayer put up by him as God-man,

* Camero de Ecclesia, p. 229.

John 17, a copy of what he does to this day in heaven, he does not *pray for the world, but for those that believe on him*, ver. 19, 20, and therefore it is plain that he does not pray for them that will not believe on him. Faith only gives an interest in the prayers Christ made on earth, or suits he urgeth in heaven.

We must also have a sincere *resolution of obedience.* Such are the subjects of Christ's intercession. The apostle had prefaced it so in the chapter before the text, and applies the cordial to such only as wallowed not in a course of gross sins; those that *walk in darkness* he excludes from any fellowship with him in any of his offices, it is a *fellowship with the Son* as well as *with the Father*, 1 *John* 1. 6, that he understands it of, ver. 3. The comfort of this intercession belongs not to those that wilfully defile themselves, but to those that abhor sin, and yet may fall through the violence of a surprizing temptation. And after he had laid down this comfortable doctrine in the text, he closes it with a limitation, to strike off the hands of any bold and undue claim to it; *Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*, ver. 3; hereby we know that we know him to be both our propitiation and our advocate, if we bear a sincere respect to all the discoveries of his will. Christ did not offer himself as a sacrifice, nor stand up as an advocate to countenance our sins, and free us from the debt of obedience, but to excite and encourage us the more; and that in a comfortable way, assuring us of pardon for our defects through him. Trust in him, and obedience to him, are the sole fee he requires of us for his care and pains.

2. Have *daily recourse* to this advocate and advocacy. It is necessary, because of our daily infirmities, and our imperfect services. We know not how to plead our own cause, nor do we understand the aggravations of those accusations that may be brought in against us. It is necessary that we should fly to

one who always is present in the court to appear for us. Every man is ready to engage any person that has the ear and interest of the judge on his side. Every man is to lift up his eye to this *advocate; If any man sin we have an advocate*, the having is little without employing. The more we exercise faith in his intercession, the more communion we have with the advocate, and the more sanctification will increase in us; *Sanctify them through thy truth, John* 17. 17, his prayer there for sanctification, is a standing notice to us whence sanctification is to be derived, viz. from heaven by virtue of this intercession.

In our shortest ejaculations, as well as our extended petitions, let us implore him under this title. No man under the law was to offer the meanest offering, though a pigeon, by his own hand, but the hand of the priest appointed to it by divine order. In all distresses, infirmities, and darkness in this world, we should get up to that mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense, *Cant.* 4. 6, (which is as some understand it, a speech of the church,) to the passion of Christ which was bitter like myrrh, to the intercession of Christ which is sweet like incense. Our whole life, till everlasting glory be ready to receive us, should be a life of faith in his death and intercession.

3. Let our affections be in *heaven with our advocate.* Though the people of Israel were barred from entering into the holy of holies with the high priest, when he went to sprinkle the blood on the mercy-seat, yet they attended him with their hearts, continued their wishes for his success, and expected his return with the notice of their acceptation. Since Christ is entered into the holy place, and acts our business in the midst of his glory, we should raise our hearts to him where he is, and unite our spirits with him; and rejoice in the assured success of his negociation. Though a man be not personally present with his advocate in

the court, yet his heart and soul is with him; the heart is where the chief business is; let us not keep our hearts from him, who employs himself in so great a concern for us.

4. *Glorify and love* this advocate. If Christ presents our persons and prayers in heaven, it is reason we should live to his glory upon earth. If he carries our names on his breast near his heart, as a signal of his affection to us, we should carry his name upon our hearts in a way of ingenuous return. We should empty ourselves of all unworthy affections, be inflamed with an ardent love to him, and behave ourselves towards him as the most amiable object. This is but due to him as he is our advocate.

THE

OBJECT OF FAITH.

John 14. 1.

LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED; YE BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME.

PART I.

THE ACT OF BELIEVING.

The text explained with observations—The object of faith—God, in conjunction with Christ—God the principal object of faith—In his attributes—His veracity—Faith centres in Deity—Particularly as the author of redemption—Christ the immediate object of faith—Was always so.

OUR Saviour in the foregoing chapter having discoursed of his death by the treachery of Judas, and upon his interruption by Peter's vaunt of his affection to him, having predicted his cowardice, could not but possess the hearts of his disciples with a wonderful trouble: What could be the first reflection upon this alarm, but a fear of the consequences of so sad a separation, and a distrust of themselves? Their Master would be removed from them by the treason of one of their own colleagues, *John* 13.21, and to a place

whither they could not at present follow him, ver. 36; they must lose that ravishing converse they had so long a time enjoyed with him; they saw themselves ready to be exposed to the fury of his, and their ill-wishers in Judea; they should want the support they had in his presence; they could not imagine how they should bear up against temptations, since the fall and apostacy of Peter, one of the most clear sighted and resolute of their associates, was in such plain words foretold in their hearing; *The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice,* ver. 38.

Christ, knowing the agitation of their spirits, proposes remedies both to calm their present fears, and arm them against sure troubles; and in this chapter mixes several cordials together, suited to their present and future condition. The grand remedy is prescribed to them in the text, which is both a preface and a thesis, which he strengthens in his following discourse; *Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me.* I know what troubles those discourses have raised in your spirits; give not way to them, there is a remedy as great as the distemper, and far greater than the cause of your fears; faith will quell all; you think you have cause to be troubled, but if you rightly understood the whole affair, you would find cause of confidence and rejoicing; you have a remedy in your trust in God, a trust which your fathers have successfully practised, and yourselves have been religiously bred in; you believe in the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God; keep that hold still, but take with you also an additional support. Believe also in me as the person designed in all the promises, from the first to Adam, to the last in the prophets; as that person in whom you shall see the evidences of the power, mercy, and goodness of that God, you and you fathers have hitherto relied upon.

Let not your heart be troubled. The word signifies

properly a commotion of water, which rages, swells, and flings up mud and slime from the bottom; or the disturbance of an army when it is out of rank and order;* and thence translated to signify perturbations and fear in the heart of man, when the rest and quietness of the mind is interrupted.

Be not troubled. Entertain no rage or fear in your spirits, do not think I have deceived you, let not your hearts swell with any disdain of me, because your carnal expectations are frustrated. We find in many places that they expected their Master's erection of a worldly empire, wherein they hoped to be his favourites, and settled in some great employments, as ministers of state; and now at the close, finding him to predict nothing but his own death, his leaving of them behind him to endure sufferings and persecutions, and all their grand expectations in a moment defeated; they might have an occasion to find storms in their spirits, rousing up all their depraved passions against him, as if he had been some impostor; well, saith he, *Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in me* as firmly as you have *believed in God*, and in the issue you will find I have not deceived you, but acted according to the directions of that God in whom you believe; your faith in me shall no more make you ashamed, than your faith in God hath done.

Observe,

I. *The best of God's people are apt to be overwhelmed with an ungrounded sorrow.* A sorrow for sin never wants ground, but a sorrow for other things often does, ignorance and heedlesness is frequently the cause of commotions in the mind of good men. These had heard in the whole course of Christ's ministry, enough to waylay their fears, and prepare them for this hour, they had heard him more than once speaking of his death, yet a fond conceit of obtaining

* ταραασσω.

an earthly grandeur by him, made them little to regard it. They had seen the power of God shielding him from the power of his enemies, and illustrious in the miracles he had wrought before their eyes, and might have fortified themselves with considerations against any dejection, till they had seen the issue. But their inadvertency, regardlessness, and ignorance, not only gave way to, but fomented their inward storms.

2. How apt is man to be troubled oftentimes at *that which conduceth to his happiness!* They are troubled at Christ's death and departure, which in themselves were the only means appointed by God for their felicity; that which was to render them happy, did in their own account render them miserable; had they known the design of it, it had rather been matter of joy to see their sins expiated, and an incensed God reconciled to them upon the surest and most irreversible terms, and to be assured that mansions should be prepared for them in heaven; but short-sighted men perceive not the secrets of divine wisdom in its paths in the world, which are double to what they apprehend, *Job* 11. 6.

3. How tender is Christ to *remedy the troubles of his people!* In his dying posture he seeks not their assistance of him, but neglects himself to cheer them up; he gives them some drops of those comforts here, whereof they were to have floods hereafter; he shows them now what he was to do in heaven, to order affairs in such a manner, as to expel their troubles; what he was so ready to do, when his calamitous condition might have excused him from so friendly an office, he will be more ready to do, since he hath nothing to obstruct him; what was his office on earth, is still his office in heaven; *let not your hearts be troubled,* is his language from the place of his glory, and while he retains his compassions, he will issue out his consolations.

4. How gracious is our Redeemer to take *occasion*

from unbelieving distrusts, to pour out his choicest cordials! Nothing so admirable was ever published to the world, as the doctrine that had dropped from his lips to his followers; he had acquainted them that redemption was the design of his coming; he had again and again assured them of his Father's and his own love to them; yet you see their corruption shoots up above their grace; their unbelieving fears seem to give the lie to all he had formerly acquainted them with; yet he doth not manifest any marks of indignation, and strike them down at his foot, as he did shortly after those that came to apprehend him, but comforts them without checking them; and, which is more astonishing, takes occasion from hence to utter something more magnificent and cordial than he had ever done before; he takes occasion from the workings of hell in them, to give them a clearer appearance of heaven, and opens that place of glory for them, which was quickly after opened for himself. His discourses after this, in this and the following chapters, bear a general eminency, and are more full of refreshments than any before; he now rains down manna upon them, and gives them that incomparable promise of the Spirit to be their comforter; after this evidence of their distrustful fear, he seems to open all the repositories in heaven to make a cordial for them. What could be done more to quell fear, and encourage faith, unless he had wafted them immediately to glory, and exchanged their faith for that eternally triumphant affection of love which shall reign in heaven?

5. Christ does not remove the cross from his people, but *comforts them under it.* He does not retract any thing he had said before, which gave life to their fear and sorrow, as many tender persons do, when they see others startled and grieved at their resolves; but he bears up their spirits, while he holds the cross upon their shoulders, and is as forward in comforting them, as the matter he had treated of was apt to dis-

quiet them. That which he uses to repel their fears, is, *ye believe in God, believe also in me.* The word πιστεύετε in our translation is in the first place in the indicative mood, in the latter in the imperative. But the text is read various ways. Some read it,

You believe in God, you do also believe in me ; * both in the indicative mood, as much as to say, since you do believe in us both, this your faith in God, and in me, will be a sufficient bulwark against all your fears. Others read it, *Believe in God, believe also in me :* both in the imperative commanding this act upon those two objects. Others read it, *believe in God,* and you do then also *believe in me ;* the first in the imperative, the second in the indicative; i. e. if you believe in God rightly, you cannot but believe in me; for there is no true faith and trust in God, but in and through the Mediator.

The matter is not great which way we read it, either thus, *Believe in God, believe also in me,* as ordering both, or *you do believe in God, believe also in me ;* as allowing the first by way of concession, and ordering the latter ; both do suit the occasion of his discourse.

You believe in God. You believe in God as the Creator, preserver, and governor of all things ; † this is natural to all to acknowledge God, to own him one way or other as an object of trust in extremity, which is evidenced by the common approach to him, and calling upon him in cases of exigence ; but this is not all that is meant here; but further, you believe the promises of God in Moses, the Psalms, and prophets, you believe all that is spoken of the Messiah by whom he hath promised to justify and save his people; thus you have the same faith your fathers had before you, and you do not only believe the authority of God speaking, by an act of your understanding, but you do embrace those promises by a consent of will, and

* Erasm. in loc. † Grot.

rely upon him for the performance of them, that he will bring forth the Messiah for those great ends and purposes for which he is promised.

Believe also in me. I do not go about to turn you from your confidence in God, but to establish it; you must, besides this, repose yourselves in me; you believe God to be true and merciful, and you believe the promises he hath made of the Messiah, you must believe in me also; you must believe that I am the person designed in all those promises, to be that Messiah; you must *believe that I am he*, as he expresses it, *John* 13. 19, that very seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head, and rest yourselves in me as that Messiah; and that fear which hath reigned in the hearts of men from the first moment of Adam's fall, will expire in the spirits of all those that have a true and sincere faith in me; for in me they will behold their restoration. If you believe God making those promises, you must also believe me to be the matter of them. I am the person which was the centre of them, that person by whom your enemies are to be destroyed, your Judge to be pacified, your pardon to be purchased. Before, a general faith in the promise of God, that there should be a Messiah, was sufficient for you; this you have, and this your fathers had; and you believe in God, promising this Messiah, and rest upon him for the accomplishment of this promise; but now since this promise is accomplished, and the Messiah is come, your faith must be more particular, you must believe me to be an all-sufficient Saviour, and must believe in me for the remission of sin, and the eternal mansions which *I am going to prepare for you;* you must firmly believe that I am the person sent by God in that capacity and office; whatsoever storms you shall see raised against me, and whatsoever black clouds you shall see me wrapped in.

Believing here notes not only an assent, but a recumbency; *Believe in me:* you do not only believe

God, but believe *in him;* i. e. rely upon him for what he hath promised: you must not only believe me to be the Messiah, but rely upon me for those things God hath promised to be done by the Messiah. *Believe in me*, i. e. believe in me as Mediator, and rely upon me for all the fruits of my mediation.

Believe in me. As you believe God is constant in his promises, so believe also that I will not forsake you, though I be absent from you. So that Christ brings them here to himself as Mediator, as well as to God the fountain of salvation; and proposes himself here as an object of faith in conjunction with the supreme Deity. Nothing would make the poor disciples so dejected, as to see him hanging on a cross, whom they expected upon a throne; and nothing but a consideration of him to be the Messiah, and a great faith in him, could support them under so unexpected a disaster.

Observe,

1. By way of caution, that this scripture is no argument *against the Deity of Christ*, because our Saviour here distinguishes God from himself.

By God here is meant the Father, and by calling the Father God, the Son is no more excluded from the Deity, than when Christ is called God, as he is; *Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. 9. 5*, the Father is excluded. Christ here asserts his own Deity in the substance of the command, in making himself an object of faith in conjunction with God, and as necessary for the support of the soul, as God himself: he orders faith in himself in the same manner as he orders it in God; *My Father works, and I work; as my Father works, so I work, John 5. 17*, because of the unity of essence, so as you believe in God the Father, believe in me also the Son.

2. It is necessary to believe Christ to be *the Messiah.* This is the first thing to be believed in the christian religion, that Jesus is the Christ, the

Saviour of the world. The apostles directed their discourses generally to prove this, *Acts* 2. 36, and 9. 22, and 18. 5, and the great medium to prove it by, was his resurrection after his death; and for not believing this, the Jews are pronounced by Paul *judgers of themselves, as unworthy of eternal life*, *Acts* 13. 46. Cornelius, before he heard Peter, believed that there would be a Messiah; but after the hearing of Peter's declaration of Christ's death and resurrection, he was to exercise a particular faith in him; and if he had not, his former faith had stood him in no stead, because he would have despised the revelation of God: how can he be said to believe God in his promise, that believes him not in his performance? I am afraid there is too much unbelief of this amongst us; we are brought up in the profession of Christ, and our faith in him is of no better a stamp than an education-faith; we understand not upon good grounds, that this Christ is the Messiah, promised from the foundation of the world.

3. Only faith in God through the Mediator, can *bear up the heart in all troubles.* This is the ballast that can keep the soul steady in a stormy sea. Fear not, but believe, said Christ, as the proper remedy; *Luke* 8. 50. Faith makes not ashamed, it elevates the heart above all that would depress it. It breeds a great and courageous spirit, and makes men willing to want the satisfactions of the flesh for the delights of heaven. To come believingly, is to come boldly in a time of need, *Heb.* 4. 16. Faith is dignified with a title of confidence, and with that of a full assurance; *Heb.* 10. 22. This was that whereby God dispelled the cloud of fear from Abraham: *Gen.* 15. 1. Fear not, Abraham, the wrath due to sin upon the revolt of man: I am sufficient to bring forth the promised seed; *I will be thy shield* against the terrors of wrath, and I will be the reward of thy faith and obedience in a glorious salvation. It was not a carnal fear, or a fear of some temporal evil; for

this speech was after his victory over the kings that had conquered and plundered Sodom; after he had been blessed by so great a type of Christ as Melchisedec was; the fear of Abraham was occasioned by his want of a child, and a seed wherein the nations of the earth were to be blessed; as appears by his answer, ver. 2, that promised seed, that was to change the curse of sin into a blessing; this seed is promised him, ver. 4, 5, and then Abraham believed, i. e. all his fears vanished, and he relied upon God for the performance of this.

4. All our comforts are *derived from above.* Christ sends them not here to the waters of the earth to quench the heat of their troubles; he directs not their eyes downwards, but upwards to God and himself; it is a scanty relief that is fetched from a man's self, and from the uncertainty of the world in shaking troubles; one God in the one Mediator outbalances all those things whence men commonly gather their supports. It is as much as if he had said, you have fancied great things to yourselves, you thought to have had great employments under that earthly royalty you imagined I should be possessed with; and no doubt but I should have had a regard to such friends as you are, that have followed me in my perplexed condition, had such a kingdom been designed me; but I would not have your souls so mean and low; take a higher flight, nourish yourselves with hopes of a purer glory, and more durable mansions which I am going to prepare for you; a temporal grandeur will only stupify your fears, not stab them to the heart; but the consideration of what I propose to you, will perfectly dispatch them.

In the text you see, I. An act: *believe in God.* II. The object: *in God, in me.* III. The fruit and effect of it, *let not your heart be troubled.*

I. I shall speak of the object, and the doctrine resulting thence will be, that God and Christ are *in conjunction, the true and proper object of faith.* Read it

which way you will, this is the result of it; he does not discourage their faith in God, but encourages that, together with faith in himself. Every act hath something about which it is exercised; faith is an act of the soul, it must therefore have an object upon which it is terminated. God is the object of faith according to his present dispensation, which is the manifestation of himself as a reconciled God through a Mediator. As he is a God of grace and peace, he is an object of faith, and trust, and joy; but grace and peace are not manifested, not given forth, not multiplied simply *by the knowledge of God*, but also of Jesus our Lord; *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and Jesus our Lord*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 2. Not by the knowledge of God alone, nor by the knowledge of Christ alone, but of God in the Mediator Christ, in whom only he is known to be our God in the covenant of grace, the spring of all our comfort; the knowledge of God, and Jesus our Lord; i. e. the knowledge of God in Jesus our Lord, Ἐν διὰ δυοῖν; *Grace and apostleship, Rom.* 1. 5, i. e. grace of apostleship.

God is not the object of faith now as *Creator;* he was so in the state of man's rectitude, and could not be considered by the creature in any other notion; but in our lapsed state God is not only considered as Creator, but as the offended Majesty, and consequently as Judge, and we cannot behold him, but encompassed with scorching flames about his throne; he that exercises faith in God merely as Creator, understands not the present condition of human nature, the malignity of his own provocations, nor the glorious perfections of righteousness, veracity, justice, which are essential to the Deity. Though the fall of man did not null the relation of God as Creator, which stands irreversible, yet it added another relation to him, that of a Judge, and destroyed all grounds and props of a trust in him for the expressions of kindness, and set up only the expectation of a mighty revenge, ac-

cording to his threatening. You find not other sentiments in Adam after his rebellion: not the least mite of a trust in God, though he had newly come out of the hands of God, and the relation of a Creator was fresh and flourishing; and why any of his posterity should have other sentiments than he had, in this single relation, I cannot receive any ground from the revelation of God; he beats the hands of the creature off from expecting any salvation from him upon that account; *It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them, will have no mercy on them, and he that formed them, will shew no favour, Isa.* 27. 11.

This is spoken upon the wasting of Jerusalem, and laying it desolate; yet, he adds for their comfort, that in that day he would gather them, and they should worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. As he was their Creator, or under the notion of a Creator, they must expect nothing from him, since they were a people of no understanding, as all men in Adam are; who being in honour, and understanding not, i. e. not walking according to the knowledge they had, *became like the beasts that perish*: But what they were to expect from him, was, as he was God Redeemer, expressed by the worship of him in the holy mount at Jerusalem, alluding to the ceremonial worship, a type of Christ, the way whereby men were to come to God, and blessings to be conveyed from God to them; he would not be the object of their expecting faith, nor of their religious worship as Creator, but as God Redeemer: and though Peter speaks of committing of souls to God, *as unto a faithful Creator*, 1 *Pet.* 4. 19, it is not to be understood of God in the first creation, but the second; and the attribute faithful annexed to Creator, evinces it; for though faithfulness be a perfection of the Deity, yet it is not apparent in the act of creation; in relation to that act, it is the powerful, wise, good Creator, but faithfulness respects the promise and covenant of grace; as righte-

ousness is a fit attribute for a judge, and so God is called, when he is spoken of under that title, 2 *Tim.* 4. 8; so powerful is a fit attribute of the Creator, as considered in the first material creation of the world.

How had God engaged himself in creation to preserve the soul of man, but in a way of obedience? Suffering was not to be expected in a state of innocence, and it is the committing of our soul to God in a suffering state, that the apostle speaks of; his engagements to this purpose are in his promises made pursuant to the covenant of grace; but he is called Creator here, in regard of the new creation, as he is called the Creator of Israel, and their king; *Isa.* 43. 15, as he is their Holy One, sanctifying them through his grace; he is no more the creator of Israel in a way of appropriation, if you consider him so in the first creation, than he is of the fallen angels, and the beasts of the earth; but as he formed them into a church, he was peculiarly their Creator; but this creation respected the Messiah, and so does this in Peter respect Christ, in whom all the promises wherein God's faithfulness is pledged, *are yea and amen.* He is the Creator of believers, as they are sons of the promise; and therefore Calvin inclines to interpret the word translated Creator here, as *possessor;* and the word does sometimes in heathen authors, though rarely, signify *preserver* or *restorer.* * Yet is not the title of God as Creator excluded from an object of trust; for since Christ hath restored in part the soul to the image of God, which it had by creation, it may expect from God as Creator, a faithfulness to his own image, and his service, but not singly as Creator, but in conjunction with the Redeemer.

I shall lay down some propositions for the clearing of this.

First, God is the object of faith.

* Stephanus in Verbo Κτίζω.

1. God is the *principal object* of faith and trust. The whole revelation in scripture tends to the knowledge of God: why did God create, but that he might be known to be omnipotent and good? Why did God send Christ, but that he might be known to be merciful and gracious? Whatsoever is revealed in the word, and concerning Christ in particular, hath a direct tendency to God, and the knowledge of him, and this practical duty which follows thereupon; *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John* 17. 3.

(1.) God in his *attributes.* He is an object of faith as made known to us, but he is made known to us in some perfections of his nature, as encouragements to approach to him, and ground our hopes in him; and he is an object of faith in every one of his distinct attributes, in his power, wisdom, goodness, and righteousness, according to our several occasions and circumstances; for he is the object of faith, as he is a God in covenant, our God; and he is our God in every attribute, which makes up that glorious nature; and those perfections of his nature were made known in Christ, that he might be known not only speculatively, but fiducially; *The name of God was in him, Exod.* 23. 21, in that angel of the covenant. Whatsoever was knowable of God, was unveiled in Christ, as the exact and perfect medium wherein we may have a prospect of God; there was more of wisdom, and more of power discovered in uniting the godhead to the manhood; more of goodness, grace, righteousness, holiness, which are all attractives to seek God, and lay hold upon him, than made known any other way, and all were discovered to promote that great doctrine of faith preached by Christ and the apostles.

(2.) Particularly the *veracity* of God is the first object, or ground of faith. He is not the first object of faith in any attribute, but his veracity. As God creates the world as he is powerful, and punishes the wick-

ed as he is just, and pardons sin as he is merciful, and provides for all as he is good, so he is believed on as true in the first motion of the soul to him. The first act of faith considers God as true in his promise, and powerful to accomplish it; *This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John* 17. 3. Αληθινὸς, signifies *verax*, as well as *verus*, not only true in thy nature, but true in thy word, the only true God in Jesus Christ, in whom there was the performance of the first and greatest promise made in paradise; by the same figure spoken of before ἐν διὰ δυοῖν.

As in loving God, we have his goodness for the immediate object, in hoping in him, we centre in his power, so in our first assent to him, we fix our eye upon his truth. * For when any declaration is proposed as from God, the first act is an inquiry whether it be from God or no; when the result of that inquiry is this, that God speaks and declares this, the assent to it is moved by the consideration of the truth of God, for to a belief of any thing that is offered, there is necessary first an evidence, that the declarer is not deceived, and that he will not willingly deceive others; in the believing that God cannot be deceived, faith respects the certainty of his knowledge; in believing that he will not deceive, and so making his word the object of our reliance, faith respects the certainty of his faithfulness and veracity. The promise is the object of trust, the reason why I trust the promiser, is his fidelity and constancy to his word.

That is not faith, which respects not either a command, promise, or threatening, in all which the faithfulness, veracity, of the person urging the precept, or uttering the threatenings, or making the promise, comes first into consideration. But justifying faith respects chiefly the promise; hence believers are

* Saurez. vol. 8. p. 65.

called *the children of the promise, Rom.* 9. 8; *Gal.* 4. 28, because by faith they entertain the promise; and as it is an assent, it hath for its object the unerring truth of God; and as it is a consent and reliance, it still principally eyes the same for the accomplishment of what he hath engaged to do for us in his word, and the first language of faith in receiving the testimony of Christ, is a testifying, or *setting to the seal that God is true, John* 3. 33, that he hath been as good as his word, and makes good what he promised to our first parents, and repeated several times since in other language.

(3.) But faith ultimately *centres in the Deity.* God himself in his glorious nature, is the ultimate object whereinto our faith is resolved. The promise simply considered, is not the object of trust, but God in the promise; and from the consideration of that we ascend to the Deity, and cast our anchor there, *hope in the word* is the first act, but succeeded by *hoping in the Lord, Psal.* 130. 5, 7; *In his word do I hope,* that is not all, *but let Israel hope in the Lord,* that is the ultimate object of faith, wherein the essence of our happiness consists, and that is God; God himself is the true and full portion of the soul. If it be asked, *why we believe God? the answer is, because he is true. If it be asked, why God is true? the answer is, because he is God, and cannot be God, unless he were true; no further answer can be given; in this the soul acquiesces as a full resolution, so that though faith in the first act respects the truth of God, yet it is ultimately resolved into the Deity itself.

(4.) It particularly centres in the Deity, *as the author of redemption, Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities, Psal.* 130. 7, 8. This takes away all the oppressive and provoking guilt of the soul by that redemption, which like a vast

* Suarez. vol. 8. p. 64.

ocean knows no bounds. As God was the first in forming the design of creation, so he was the first in laying the platform of redemption, and appointing Christ to be a sacrifice for the expiation of our sins, and ransom of our souls. As our thanksgivings are to be directed to him, as he is the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Ephes.* 1. 3, so is our faith: this was the title he assumed, and he is *the Father of glory*, in being *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 17. He was the orderer of all those glorious acts Christ did, and that purchase he made. He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, not in regard of his divine nature, wherein there is not a superiority of power, though a priority of order, Christ in regard of his divine nature not being inferior to, but equal with God: but in regard of his mediatory office, as he was the ambassador of God, and his righteous servant, acting by his commission and authority according to his particular instructions; and in regard of the covenant between them.

He is said to be the God of Christ, as he is said to be the God of Abraham, not in regard of his creating him, but in a more special manner, as being in covenant with him. Now faith looks through the ambassador to the prince that employs him, and through the servant, to the Lord that sends him, and to the person that first proposed the terms of the covenant, and revealed his everlasting purpose of saving sinners by Christ. Faith looks beyond the time of Christ's conversing in the flesh, and sealing the covenant by his blood; it looks to the everlasting plan of it in the bosom of the Deity, beyond the beam of it in the incarnation and death of Christ, beyond the first promise of it in paradise; *Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? Hab.* 1. 13. The prophet looks back to the everlasting springs of it in the heart of the Deity, and pierces to the first point of the resolve, and thence concludes, *we shall not die*: it was not

barely the eternity of God he considers there; for that simply considered, might be an argument for the restoration and the sanctification of devils, as well as Israel.

But God from everlasting, as *his God*, and *his Holy One*, as resolving upon a covenant of grace, and to be a sanctifier of his people, and from thence his faith draws a conclusion of an impossibility of dying, and a certain assurance of enjoying life. And the apostle's faith looked to Christ as the medium, *by whom are all things*, but to the Father of whom, by whose authority all things are, 1 *Cor.* 8. 6. Faith doth not stick only in Christ, but mounts up to the Deity, as the fountain and spring of all; *He that believes on me, believes not on me*, saith Christ, *but on him that sent me*, *John* 12. 44. Not on me chiefly, not on me solely; it must pierce through the veil to the original wisdom that contrived, and the original authority that enacted, and the grace which inspired every action of the Mediator.

God is the ultimate object of faith in all our considerations of Christ; to this purpose he was raised, that our *faith and hope might be in God*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 21, that it might not be immoveably in Christ, *Rom.* 4. 24, but be as a ladder to get up, and clasp about the Highest and the Ancient of days. In Christ we see first the smiles of God, in him we hear the tender voice of his mercy, in him we feel the lively and affectionate motions of his heart; when we have fixed on Christ, faith rests not there, but ascends ultimately to God as the great promoter of this design, by whose authority all was transacted, and before whom all is to be finished, as to him who set out this propitiation for sin, and keeps in his own hand the royalty of pardoning iniquity.

2. *Christ* is the object of faith. God alone was the object of trust in the state of innocence, and under the covenant of works; the covenant, *Do this and live*, being established between God and man without a

Mediator, none could be the object of trust for the performance of the promise upon condition of obedience, but God in the simplicity of his own being without any other relation. But under the covenant of grace which is settled in a Mediator, *Believe this and live,* Christ the Mediator is an object of faith, though God be still the ultimate object; because we believe in him, that he will give us life and salvation for the merit of this Mediator in whom we believe first.

Therefore Christ is the *immediate* object of faith: as he by whom all the councils of redemption were executed, as he who assumed our nature, to suffer in it for the satisfaction of divine justice, and was raised again to transact our affairs, and manifest the value, and infinite fulness of that satisfaction. We cannot look upon God under any other notion than that of an incensed governor and judge, if we well apprehend the condition of lapsed man; unless we behold him in and through a Mediator, the terrors of his majesty would confound us, we dare not look him in the face because of our vileness as sinners, we must first therefore fasten our eyes upon the Mediator, and then upon God. The mercy of God in pardoning sin is that which faith exercises itself about, the satisfactory death of Christ upon the account of sin to be pardoned, must be the first and immediate object of this faith; Christ must first be known, because the riches of divine grace are knowable and manifested only in him; God speaks not a word of mercy out of this propitiatory: faith being an applying the reconciliation and mercy obtained, it must consider and believe the satisfaction of divine justice whereby it was obtained.

Before any man can think to stand before the face of God's justice, and be admitted into the secret delights of his mercy, and riches of his grace, he must consider this Mediator as appeasing God, and consider the voice of God proclaiming himself ap-

peased in his Son, *Matt.* 3. 17. We are first to believe and rest upon the strength and value of this sacrifice, and with this in the hands of our faith, go to God with a further act of faith, for an application to us of what was purchased for us. It is *by him* we believe in God, 1 *Pet.* 1. 21, we must first therefore believe *in him;* the faith therefore that justifies, is called *the faith of Christ*, *Gal.* 2. 16; and in other places it is called a *coming to God by Christ*, *Heb.* 7. 24. It is therefore first a coming to Christ to bring us to God. We cannot *come to the Father but by him*, as he speaks in the same chapter where the text is, ver. 6, pursuant to the doctrine he had laid down in the first verse, and must first therefore *come to him as the way, the truth, and the life.* It is in him, and *the faith of him, that we have access with confidence*, *Eph.* 3. 12.

There must first be a coming to him, to be inspired with confidence; he that will come to the holy of holies, must pass through the veil: thus Christ is brought in in the prophet proclaiming himself the object of faith; *Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Isa.* 45. 22; it is that person is introduced speaking, to whom *every knee should bow*, that person *in whom we have righteousness and strength*, that person *in whom all the seed of Israel should be justified*, ver. 23, 24, 25. It is in him we can find all things necessary for our deliverance from the ruin sin hath brought upon us, whatsoever is necessary to restore us to the happiness we have lost. In him is righteousness, to remove our variance with God, and sanctification to clear us from what may be offensive to the eyes of his holiness; and therefore the apostle, calls Christ *our hope*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 1; i. e. the object of our hope, as God is called *the fear of Isaac*, *Gen.* 31. 53. The Israelites' worship was directed towards the tabernacle and temple where the ark was placed, their thoughts were to be fixed on that; so all the motions of our souls must be directed to Christ, and in and

by him to God. And therefore faith in regard of this immediateness of it is appropriated to Christ as the proper and proxime object, and called *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, in regard of his mediating and reconciling us; whereas repentance respects God immediately who hath been offended by us, and therefore called *repentance towards God*, *Acts* 20. 21.

PART II.

CHRIST THE OBJECT OF PATRIARCHAL FAITH.

The object of David's faith—Moses—Abraham—Enoch—Abel—Adam—Eve—All under the law had their faith upon the Messiah—This is evident by their sacrifices—Their sacrifices in themselves nothing—Their reference to the sacrifice of Christ gave them all their importance—The faith of the ancients was expressed by waiting and trusting.

AS Christ was the immediate object of faith, he was always so *in the times of the patriarchs*, and the *immediate* object, though not *so distinct as now*.

First. He was the immediate object of *their* faith. As he is the object of faith now, as actually destroying the works of the devil, so he was the object of faith then, as potentially bruising the head of the serpent; the object was always the same, though diversified; they believed in the Messiah to be incarnate, those that lived in the days of his flesh believed in his present incarnation and passion, those that lived after, believed in him as dying and rising; the faith was the same for substance, the same for object, only differenced in point of time, future, present, past.

It is clear of *David; The Lord said unto my Lord, Psa.* 110. 1, he calls him *his Lord*, that was his Son, *Luke* 22. 44. Observe, when he speaks of God, or the Father, or the Deity singly considered, it is the Lord; but when of Christ, it is my Lord, a more particular application and appropriation of the one than of the other.

It is as clear of Moses; *Esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, Heb.* 11. 26; what esteem could he have of the reproach of Christ, if he never knew or believed any thing of him? Upon what account should he refuse so great an earthly honour to be treated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, but upon some higher account than the hopes of enjoying an earthly Canaan, not a better land in itself than Egypt, which was counted the fruitfulest spot in the world? It was certainly the promise of *the seed wherein all nations* should be *blessed*, and which he might be twitted with by the Egyptians.

It is plain of *Abraham.* The gospel was preached to him in that promise, *In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, Gal.* 3. 8. Abraham in some sort understood it as God preached it; it cannot be thought God should preach the gospel to him and he understand nothing of gospel in it; and as it was preached to him to raise his faith, so it was entertained by him with a suitable act of faith, he eyed the Mediator in it, who was to bless all nations, and remove the curse which Adam had brought upon his posterity. He is called the father of us all in regard of his believing; *The father of us all, Rom.* 4. 16, of all the believers among the Romans, who were not all of Jewish extraction; so the apostle understands that promise made unto him, thou shalt be the Father of many nations, i. e. of many believers among many nations, he should be a copy and pattern of their faith, which could not well be, if he had not the same object of faith that they were afterwards to have, and

had not for substance the same prospect of Christ. He did *see the day* of Christ in that promise, and *was glad*, *John* 8. 56, that which was the matter of his joy, must be the object of his faith; if he rejoiced in the day of his appearing, he believed in the person who was to appear in that day; joy is so far from being without a belief, that it is a branch that springs from that root.

Enoch pleased God by faith, and walked with him. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed. But there was no agreement between God and lapsed man but in the reconciling Mediator, for God out of the promised seed was as terrible then, as God out of Christ is now.

By faith *Abel* offered a sacrifice, *Heb.* 11. 4. It must be a belief in the person signified by that sacrifice. God was not the object of his faith barely as Creator, the first threatening of death, which he could not well be unacquainted with, put a bar to that; but it must be a faith in God as a promiser, and so had the matter of the promise, the seed, for its object; it was such a faith whereby he believed God to be a rewarder, ver. 6, which he could have no prospect of but in the redeeming declaration. It was such a faith upon which God pronounced him righteous, which could not be as he stood upon his natural corrupted foundation, he looked for a righteousness in and by that which was represented by his sacrifice, and he obtained a witness from heaven that he was righteous. It is very likely his sacrifice was accompanied with petitions for the hastening the appearance of that seed, and thanksgivings to God for making that gracious promise, and performing those acts of grace after the fall, which necessary attendants were neglected by Cain. It cannot be supposed that Abel could be ignorant of the promise, unless we can suppose Adam so forgetful of it, as never to mention that which could be his only support in his removal from Paradise; he that knew the delights of

his original state, cannot be imagined to slight a cordial so necessary to keep up his spirits in his exiled condition; the reflection upon his former state must needs fill his mind with a sense of the curse he at the present lay under; and this would by consequence mind him of the remedy God had provided for it; and with what pleasing eye could he look upon his children whom he had brought into that misery, without administering, like a tender nurse, some suitable cordial.

That *Adam* exercised a faith immediately upon this object, the promised seed, is not difficult to represent to you; *And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living;* כלחי *of all living*, *Gen.* 3. 20, in the singular number, or the mother of him that was to enliven all that were to be enlivened, of the latter Adam, who was to be made a quickening spirit, of that person who was to communicate life to the world; * or if we understand it of all living, in the plural number, he includes himself then. But she could not be the mother of him according to an animal life, but as one to be spiritually quickened and restored by the seed of the woman; he gave this name to his wife just after the sentence of death, and returning to dust, pronounced upon him, ver. 19, and had he been possessed only with an horror of that sentence, he would rather have called her the mother of all dying, than of all living; and the name Eve signifying life, shows that he did not so much in this name respect her as a mother, but that life which was to be brought forth into the world by her seed, that restoration promised; giving her this name just after the sentence of returning to dust, he evidences his faith in that seed, whereby man that was sentenced to death should live again; the Holy Ghost placing this imposition of a new name upon her, who was before called Isha, woman,

* Heydeg. Vit. Patriar. vol. 1. Coccei Disput. selec. Disp. 9, sect. 12. Pareus in Gen. 3. 20.

just after the sentence of death, is not without an intimation that Adam looked beyond the sentence of death, to the promise made before of bruising that enemy, whose subtlety had brought upon him that judgment, and laid hold on that promise to support him against the sentence of returning to dust.

Such a relation to the promise it must have; we can hardly think that Adam in the state of his fall, and under so gracious a word of deliverance, should be guilty of so great a pride, as in a vaunt and contempt of the divine sentence, to call her the mother of all living, who had brought death upon the world. How could he call her the mother of all living, when he had just before heard that he was to return to dust, if he had not respected a better and a higher life than that short one he was to pass in the world, and respected also the cause of it? Had he respected only an animal life, he might as well have called himself the father of all living, since we find the name of Abraham and Sarah changed upon the giving the promise. But without question, he had respect in this to the Messiah, who was to be the seed of the woman, in appropriating this title to her.* And she might be called the mother of all living, in regard of her faith, as Sarah is called the mother of all believing women, 1 *Pet.* 3. 6; because the promise mentioning only the *seed of the woman*, and not of the man, might give her occasion first to exercise a faith in it before Adam did. Besides, that particle and, And Adam called his wife Eve, &c. uniting it with what went before, ver. 20, wherein death was pronounced, shows that he considered the promise of restoration as his support in that state; so that the Messiah in the promise, or *the seed of the woman* to bruise the serpent's head, was the immediate object of his faith.

And finally, *Eve* also expresseth her faith in this seed. *When Eve bare Cain, she said, I have gotten a man from the Lord, Gen.* 4. 1. It is true, the

* Ainsworth in loc.

word את is sometimes the note of other cases, as well as the accusative, as with Jacob, *Exod.* 1. 1, where it is the same particle את, and *Enoch walked with God, Gen.* 5. 22, את; and some interpret it *from the Lord*, i. e. by God's gift and favour; others *with the Lord;* others, *a man, the Lord.* It doth not seem to be any straining of the text, to render it, *a man, the Lord*, as respecting the promised seed in her son, the first seed God was pleased to give her, giving him the name Cain, * as if he were the person that were to repossess them again of paradise, and restore them to their happy estate. As a little before, Adam had manifested his faith in the name Eve, which he gave to his wife, and the reason of it, so in the birth of Cain, there might be as fit an occasion for manifesting the faith of Eve; and it is very probable there might be something more in it, than barely an acknowledgment of a mere child from God, and some regard to the promise; since we find no special remark upon any name presently after, but what did refer to that promise, as that upon Noah, of whom Lamech said, *This same shall comfort us, concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed, Gen.* 5. 29, for the return of the sons of men, adds Jonathan, which does evidently point to that promised seed, whereby he expected the curse to be taken off the ground; and though they both erred in their conceptions of the persons, yet it was a sign they bore a sense of the promise in their minds, though Cain was not that special seed. This particle את, between two nouns, grammarians say, specifies the person, or thing spoken of; *I will set one shepherd over them, even David my servant, Ezek.* 34. 23. And it is to be considered that an ancient paraphrast, Jonathan Ben Uzziel, who best understood the idiom of the Hebrew language, explains it so; a man, the Lord.

And the *objection* against this interpretation, that

* So Fagius, Luther, Coccius, Schindler, Foster.

Eve erred in her imagination of the birth of the promised seed to be like the birth of other men, signifies not much; so did Lamech in the birth of Noah; yet his speech cannot be denied to have some respect to the promise; and why may not both their errors be very well ascribed to the vehemency of their longing, which argued the greatness of their faith, and the obscurity of their revelation? That there should be such a seed, was manifest to them from the truth of God: but the manner how this seed should be brought forth into the world, whether of a virgin, was hid from them, and not revealed till many ages after. I do not see any inconvenience in thus interpreting this place; as if Eve should have said, I have gained that very man, the Lord; that divine person promised to be the conqueror of the serpent, that hath been the cause of bringing this misery upon us.

All those *that believed under the law*, had their faith fixed upon the Messiah. We may easily perceive by the whole eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, that the substance of faith was always the same, and therefore the object of faith was in the gross, confusedly, or distinctly, the same; upon this account * all believers from the beginning of the world may be called christians. Whatsoever the ceremonies of the church might be, their faith had the same foundation, was of the same tenure, upon the promised seed it was, and the bruising of the serpent, and removing of the curse by it was longed for; the whole mystery of prophecy was designed for the encouragement and support of this faith. Eating and drinking are metaphors to signify faith in its applicatory act; this the ancients are said to do, *They eat Christ in the manna, and drank Christ in the rock*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 3, 4. They came to God as a rewarder; that was as necessary to be considered by them, as the existence of a God to be believed by them. *Heb.* 11. 6. Not as a re-

* As Eusebius saith, Hist. lib. 1. cap. 4.

warder in a way of nature; they could not but know Adam's fall to be a discouragement to such expectations: but in a way of grace, according to the promise made to Adam after the fall.

This Messiah the church perpetually held under all the corruptions of ages, and the abuses of the watchmen, and would *not let him go, Cant.* 3. 4. They had the same fruits of faith under the law, and therefore the same substantial object of faith as we have under the gospel; all that were justified and saved, had the sentence of justification pronounced upon them on no other account than we have; which Paul labours to evidence in several places; especially in *Rom.* 4, throughout the whole chapter, in the examples of Abraham and David. Their justification was by faith, which faith was *imputed to them for righteousness;* and what that faith was, the apostle plainly deciphers; *It was written for us, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,* ver. 23, 24. If his faith were of another kind, and had another object, God alone, and not God in Christ; it could not have been so positively said, it was *written for our sakes.*

It is a faith in God through Christ that is imputed to us under the gospel for justification. It was a faith in God through the Messiah that was imputed to them. It was imputed to them, it shall be imputed to us, the same faith fixed upon the same object: it would not be any strong arguing in the apostle, that Abraham and we should be alike justified by faith, if our faith and his were not the same, and embraced not the same object. All that were sanctified, were perfected by Christ, *Heb.* 10. 14. If any came to the Father, they came by him; because *no man comes to the Father*, but by that true and living way, *John* 14. 6: they anciently embraced the promises, *Heb.* 11. 13; what? with the neglect of the first and root-promise, to which all the other promises were

but appendixes, or comments upon it? Could they embrace the comments, and act faith upon nothing of the text? It was an heavenly inheritance they expected, *for they confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* And *they looked for a city, whose builder and Maker is God, a city having foundations,* ver. 10, i. e. an immutable state, which they could not do, if they had not exercised their faith about that first promise, which took off the execution of the first threatening, and promised the ruin of that enemy which had ruined their health they had in the first creation, and could all this be without a faith in that Messiah, who was to be the worker of those glorious things, who was indeed the author and finisher of faith; the author of it, or the foundation of it in the ancient Israelites, in the types and figures; and the finisher and completer of it in his appearance in the flesh, and bloody passion, wherein he laid the top-stone.

This may be further cleared, if we consider,

1. *Sacrifices in themselves* could be no content and satisfaction to them, nor the proper object of their faith. They could not but be sensible of too great a burden to be taken off from them, and supported by the weakness of a lamb; they could not but be sensible of too deep a stain to be washed off from them by the blood of a little kid, or a greater quantity of it in a heifer. Could they possibly imagine that the blood of beasts could give them a title to heaven, and eat through those bars that justice had fixed upon them? Or the smoke of the carcase of a slain beast could remove the impurity of their sins? It is an injury to the faith of those worthies so highly celebrated, *Heb.* 11, to think that it fell so flat, and was drowned in the blood and bowels of beasts, and mounted no higher than the smoke of their entrails, that they expected no higher expiation, and no higher contentment, as the issue of those things.

Though some of those worthies wandered about in

sheep-skins and goat-skins, Heb. 11. 37, yet their faith was not wrapped up in the *skins of lambs*, or hides of heifers, since they had so often heard by the prophets that those things were not pleasing to God in themselves, that he did not *eat the flesh of bulls, and drink the blood of goats, Psal.* 50. 13. Though they knew God true to perform his promise, and merciful to pity their miseries, yet they knew him to be of a pure and spiritual nature, above any delight in a ceremonious pomp, and too just to be appeased by an herd of consecrated animals. The groans and repeated desires of the ancient saints for the consolation of Israel, that the *salvation of Israel would come out of Sion*, their hungry waitings for God's salvation, manifested that those things were thought too weak by them to ease them of their burdens, to procure the good things they felt the need of. If their faith had been confined to those sacrifices, if it had here taken its rest, and laid its head at ease upon a pillow of beasts' skins, what ground was there for those groans, those ardent desires for another kind of salvation, even when they were in the most prosperous and flourishing condition, tasting every day of the milk and honey of Canaan, and settled in a ceremonious worship of God's institution? Surely their faith ascended above the blood and smoke of the sacrifices, to the throne of the Messiah; sacrifices were the gospel in a rough draught, not with the perfect lineaments.

2. They could not but apprehend some *mystery in these ceremonies*, and use them as assistances of their faith, and as means to conduct it to the right object. They could not but apprehend them to be rather the representations of the true object of faith, than to be the proper object themselves. It can hardly be imagined, that all the Israelites looked no further than the shell of sacrifices and ceremonies; that their eyes were terminated to the outward pomp and bloody offerings, without any respect to some mystery in them; they could not but conjecture that those types were

significant of some great work to be done;* it could never enter into the understanding of rational men, that all that corporeal worship was enjoined for itself, and that those multitudes of ceremonies were without a signification of something to them; when there were such perpetual orders about the tabernacle, the meanest utensils of it, the ark and propitiatory, the cherubims to overshadow it, the shewbread, the sacrifices, the scape-goat, it was known to them, that all those had a respect to the expiation of sin, and therefore must represent some other greater thing, which might be sufficient for the expiation, since they could not but judge those things too feeble to attain so great an end of themselves, or else they must have very unworthy and unbecoming notions of God, and very slight imaginations of the deep taint original sin had left upon their natures; with which we cannot imagine that the minds of believers could be possessed.

They knew that God was infinitely wise, that in every thing that he did and ordered, there was something to be understood by them; could they think that the passage through the Red sea was intended only to deliver them, and had no further aim, since God could have delivered them many other ways, struck the enemy dead upon their march, or enabled the Israelites to overcome them in a plain fight? The wiser at least might well think that the manna, rock, the serpent lifted up in the wilderness for the healing of the people, and many other actions of God among them, had something mysterious in them, though they could not discern every lineament of that mystery.

Did not all these things tend to the encouragement of their faith, pursuant to the first promise? and was the design of them altogether unknown to those for whose sake they were appointed? If they were all baptized in the Red sea, can we think that all were ignorant of something of the spiritual meaning of it?

* Amyr. Moral. tom. 1. p. 128, 129.

1 *Cor.* 10. 1, 2, 3, 4. Did they eat Christ in the manna, and drink Christ in the rock? Did they *eat the spiritual meat, and drink the spiritual drink*, and did all of them eat and drink it unspiritually, without any understanding of the general spiritual signification of it? Our fathers, saith the apostle, speaking to the Gentile Corinthians; the Israelites were not the Corinthians fathers according to the flesh, but their fathers in faith; the faith then the Israelites had in the type, must respect the antitype, Christ; upon whom only the faith of the Corinthians was pitched. That could not be the same faith that had two different objects, as distant from one another, as heaven from earth; can a faith in the Messiah, and a faith terminated only in corporeal manna, and the liquid waters of a rock, be accounted a faith equally great, and of the same kind?

The nature of faith, as well as any other act of the soul or body, is quite changed by the object about which it is conversant; the mystery of those things could not be altogether unknown to so many thousands. Would God not hide from Abraham the thing which he would do about Sodom, since Abraham should become a mighty nation, and that God knew that he would command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, *Gen.* 18. 17, 18, 19. And would God totally hide the mystery veiled under those things from Moses, whom he had appointed the conductor of this people under him; one who had an excellency above all prophets, to be known by God *face to face? Deut.* 34. 10, i. e. saith Maimonides, to have an apprehension of things bestowed upon him above what any of the prophets which followed him in Israel had, and one that the Spirit of God in the history associates with God himself as the object of the Israelites' faith, after the deliverance at the Red sea, as a type of Christ. * *They*

* More. Navoch, Part. 2. cap. 25.

feared the Lord, and believed in the Lord, and in his servant Moses, Exod. 14. *ult.* for so the words run in the Hebrew, believed in the Lord, and in Moses, as implying a mystery; can we think the mystery was wholly obscured from him? Was not his mind enlightened to some apprehensions of what was couched under all those things? Surely it was, and he would not conceal it to himself, and veil it from all the people.

The gospel was preached to the Israelites while they were in the wilderness: *Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it, Heb.* 4. 2. They had the word preached to them, and that word was the gospel; Christ therefore, that is the substance and marrow of the gospel, was preached to them, preached to them in the types, manna, and the rock, and the serpent lifted up; preached to them in the promise of Canaan; and who were those it was preached to? The Israelites in the wilderness: it was to them to whom *God sware, that they should not enter into his rest;* to them who had *grieved him forty years,* and whose carcases fell in the wilderness. And why did they not enter into his rest? Because they believed not, *Heb.* 3. 17, 18, 19; and what was that which they did not believe? That we may not think it was only the promise of entering into the land of Canaan that they thus discredited, he tells us that it was the gospel that they did not believe, the gospel they rejected by their murmuring against manna and Canaan: those therefore that did believe among them, believed the gospel, pitched upon Christ who is the marrow of the gospel, they saw Christ in the manna, and Christ in the pleasant land promised them, Christ in the blood of the sacrifices; the whole was the christian religion in its rough draught: if the gospel were thus preached to them, Christ was the object of faith; would God preach the gospel to them wholly in vain,

so that no act of an evangelical faith should be exercised by any of them? Would he be at such pains to send forth a vain sound, so many ages one after another to people, to whom he would give no understanding, not to a man of them, in some measure of what he meant by it? It cannot be supposed that the gospel should be preached to them in all those figures, without a gospel faith exercised by some of them upon that which was represented by those shadows; they had else been in vain and to no purpose to them.

3. The object of their hope and trust under all that dispensation was the *Messiah*, and their faith was *expressed by waiting and trusting*. Jacob, upon his death-bed, breathes out his soul in longing for God's salvation, or God's Jesus; *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord, Gen.* 49. 18, and that in a very remarkable manner. Our interpreters refer it to a prediction of Sampson, who was of the tribe of Dan, who was afterwards a deliverer of the Israelites, and say, that Jacob's prophetic foresight of the dangers of that tribe made him break out into such a pathetic expression. But did not the other tribes conflict with dangers as well as Dan? Why should Jacob have such an eruption of soul in his speaking of this tribe, more than of any other which were more considerable, and were to undergo as great sufferings as this? Besides, Jacob speaks not of Dan as afflicted, but as victorious, ver. 16. 17, he should judge his people, and as a serpent overthrow the rider. Jacob had certainly an higher consideration.

And therefore some of the ancient Rabbins * thus paraphrase the words: When Jacob foresaw Gideon and Sampson to be the deliverers of his posterity, he says, I do not so much expect the salvation by Gideon, nor the deliverance by Sampson, which are temporal and created salvations, but I expect that re-

* Jonathan Ben Uzziel and Targium Hiew, solprint in loc.

demption which thou hast promised in thy word to come to Israel, that salvation which shall be for ever. The occasion of this sudden ejaculation of Jacob will easily clear the thing. He had been speaking of Dan, and likens him *to a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider should fall backwards*, ver. 16, 17; probably the speaking of Dan, as a serpent, and his subtilty, minded him of the trick the serpent played our first parents, who is described by the quality of the *subtilest of all the beasts of the field*, *Gen.* 3. 1; and then breaks forth into an high expression of faith in that salvation which God had promised against that serpent. If this were not the occasion of it, why did he not utter the same expression upon a very fit occassion, when he had spoken before of the tribe of Judah, and of Shiloh's coming of that tribe? ver. 10. But upon this occasion only, and no other, in his whole prophecies, he breathes out his soul in such an expression: He kept this promise of the seed of the woman, and salvation by him, as a depositum in his heart, fed upon it all his days, and makes a solemn confession of his faith in him in his dying posture.

The Psalmist ardently expected it as those that *watch for the morning*, tired with a gloomy and tedious night; *My soul waits for the Lord, more than they that wait for the morning, I say, more than they that watch for the morning*, *Psa.* 130. 6. The repetition speaks the vehemence of his faith; it was after he had spoken of forgiveness of sin being with God, ver. 4, he expresseth his waiting; *I waited for the Lord, my soul waits for the Lord*, because it is a soul mercy I desire, *in his word do I hope*, ver. 5; in that first promise of the Messiah, and all the promises of pardon and propitiation, built upon that foundation. *I wait more than they that watch for the morning*, when the sacrifices are to be continued in the temple*, my soul waits for

* Chaldee Paraphr. in loc.

that Messiah who is to bring forth a plenteous redemption, that Lord who is to redeem Israel from all his iniquities. I wait for him in these sacrifices more than those do for the morning, wherein they are appointed to offer their sacrifices.

The object of their waiting was the same with that of Simeon, *The consolation of Israel, Luke* 2. 25; and that consolation was the Lord Christ, ver. 26. It was the promise made to the fathers that they hoped in; that hope of the promise, for which Paul was accused and set before a tribunal, which was his hope in Christ, *Acts* 26, 6, 7: waiting and hope are the words whereby faith is expressed in the old testament; faith respects things present or past, hope respects things future, and to be exhibited; they believed the promise of the Messiah, and hoped for the accomplishment of it. Since Christ was the object of their hope, he was also the object of their faith. Since faith is the root of hope, nothing can be waited for, but what is believed to be certainly and infallibly to come to pass. Their salvation, propitiation of their sins, redemption of their souls, they expected from Christ, and therefore their faith must be pitched upon him before he came.

PART III.

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Darkness of the former revelations—Christ is the object of faith in his person—As sent of God to redeem —In his offices—In his crucifixion—The formal object of the first promise—Proposed to the Jews in all their sacrifices—By the apostles—Future faith of the Jews—Christ alone the immediate object of faith—The life of faith—The object of faith in his exaltation.

THE *second* part of the proposition was, that though Christ was the immediate object of the faith of the ancients, yet *he was not so distinct an object as now.*

They could not have a distinct knowledge, *because the revelation was dark*; both in the obscurity of the prophecies wherein it was signified, and the shadiness of the ceremonies wherein it was represented; and from this obscurity they had many extravagant imaginations of an earthly Messiah, not in the contemptible form of a servant, but in the royal posture of a prince, with a magnificent attendance, to break the Roman yoke; because, as the spiritual glory of the Messiah was signified, so it was obscured also by those earthly terms; and indeed they could not well have understood those spiritual mysteries without the expressions of them in terms suited to their sense.

The mercy of God and the incarnation of the Messiah they had a knowledge of, but not so clear in their knowledge of *his death*. The mercy of God was the distinct object of their faith, that was fully revealed to secure them against the fears of justice, and revealed to be brought about in and through the Messiah; their faith in that was distinct, as appears, *Psa.* 130. 3, 4, and the publican's address was supported by the simple consideration of the mercy of God, *Luke* 18. 3, but the particular methods of the discovery of this mercy, in and by the Messiah, they were ignorant of. Yet a Messiah incarnate they were clear in, and as such he was represented as a distinct object of their faith, and thus they considered his person and glory, and their hearts longed for him.*

They knew by the first promise, that he would be an extraordinary person, and by the titles God had given him of his righteous servant, that he should be an holy person, that he should be in high favour with God, because he was styled *the Branch*, and *the Branch of righteousness*, *Zech.* 6. 12, and 3, 8. *Jer.* 33. 15. That he was to be a king upon a glorious throne, and a priest of a more excellent order than Aaron, even according to the order of Melchisedec, they could not be ignorant of, and a prophet whose words they were not to refuse upon the peril of their souls; such oracles of him were plainly delivered. But what was the religion he should settle by virtue of his prophetic office, or the conquests he should make, or the government he should establish as a king, or the sacrifices he should offer as a priest, they did not clearly understand.

Christ in all those offices was veiled in types, they had only the rough draught of a picture, the light and colours were not yet added, the virtue of all lay hid in a dispensation of shadows: though they trusted in God for a Mediator, yet they understood not the

* Amyraut. Moral. tom. 4. p. 120, 121.

manner of the administration of this office, only they expected a clearness of knowledge, a firm peace, and a salvation by him. They had a faith in the gross, embraced the promise, saluted the things promised afar off, and rested upon the wisdom of God to clear up all in time, and bring all about that his grace had assured them of.

We are not certain, that any thing besides his incarnation, and some kind of suffering, was revealed to Adam; his incarnation in his being called *the seed of the woman*, and his suffering in the *bruising of his heel* by the serpent, *Gen. 3. 15*; but whether he understood that he was to redeem them by death, from that expression of his bruised heel, or did collect it from the sacrifices instituted as a representation of this way of redemption, and a support to his faith in it, we have no assurance. But that he did understand a salvation and redemption of him and his posterity to be wrought by that seed, is evident by the promise. God does not usually make a promise to people, but he gives them some understanding of that promise which may conduce to their refreshment, the promise would be otherwise useless.

Had not Adam had some understanding of the intent of the promise, his despair could not have been remedied, he could not with any heart have performed worship to God, which consists in prayer and thanksgiving; nor have taught his posterity to worship, if he had not understood something of the intent of the promise, which he did as appears by Abel's sacrifice; and we cannot think that he omitted the worship of God till the time of Seth, when the scripture speaks of it again, which was about a hundred years; and that he had no children between is easily gathered from *Gen.* 4. 25, wherein Eve calls him a seed instead of Abel. But yet the representations he and his posterity had, were at the best but like a bright cloud which kept off the heat of divine wrath, and shed some rays upon them, not a clear sun-shine; the

glory of Christ was in the bud, and not so visible, as the glory of a flower is hid in the bud till it comes openly to display itself, and then it refreshes every sense.

They could not have such a distinct view, and therefore their faith could not so distinctly exercise itself about every part of this Messiah as ours may. They saw the Messiah as we do a man at a distance or in a disguise; we see him to be a man, but know not what man, we discern not his distinct features and lineaments; they saw him as the Israelites saw Moses's face through the veil, not in all its splendour and glory. This indistinct faith being caused by an imperfect revelation, did not prejudice their interest in the saving grace of the Messiah, for God is so righteous as not to require a faith, but what is proportioned to the revelation he vouchsafes. They were members of Christ with their faith in the gross under Moses, as well as we with our more particular faith under Paul and the apostles.

Our faith under this dispensation *must* be more distinct. While the revelation was in the gross, a faith in the gross was sufficient. But for us who have a clearer revelation, a more distinct faith is required, proportioned to the measure and circumstances of the discovery. When they saw the sacrifices offered by the priest, they might know that they were typical; but how exactly in every part they answered to the Antitype, neither did they know then, nor we now; but since we are not under types but clear manifestations, since the fulness of time is come, and the veil is rent in twain, since Christ hath passed through the valley of the shadow of death to his throne of glory, a confused faith will not serve our turn. God in regard of his veracity, mercy, and goodness, was the distinct object of their faith, Christ a more obscure one; now one is as distinct as the other. Therefore Christ says, *Believe also in me*, in the same manner and as distinctly as you did believe in the mercy and truth of

God. The former revelation was not intended to draw out a faith from them as explicit as ours ought to be, but was intended to confirm us who should live in and after the fulness of time, that by the consideration of the ancient predictions, and comparing them with the after-transactions, we should have our faith strengthened by them. This is clearly expressed by Peter; *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. By all these obscure revelations anciently, we have certain evidence of the truth of those things declared to us in the gospel.

1. Christ is the immediate object of faith in his *person*. *Believe also in me*, that I am the great person appointed by God for the redemption of the world. Christ in this speech directs them to *himself*, not to a promise; it is not, believe in this or that promise, but in me. As faith in God centres in the Deity, so faith in Christ centres in his person. Promises may be a ground, yet they are not the object of a justifying faith, nor are they in any sort objects of faith in themselves; but in regard of the good things promised in them; as they contain in them the grace of God, and the blessings of the mediation of Christ, they direct us to Christ; as the proclamation and promise of a prince directs and encourages the rebels to come into his presence, and supplicate his pardon. Faith is called a *coming to Christ*, *Matt.* 11. 28, which rather notes his person than his doctrine. It is not a faith simply in his godhead that is required by him, for so he is the object of faith in the same manner as the Deity is; nor simply in his manhood, for so he is no more the object of faith than another man may be; but Christ in his person God-man. Christ must be believed in, as God gives him: God gives his person first, and then his benefits; the benefits bestowed upon us are consequential to the gift of his person to us; *He first deli-*

vered him for us, and then with him gives us all things. *Rom.* 8. 32.

The blessings expected are not the object of our faith, but Christ by whom those benefits were purchased, and by whom they are conveyed to us. God gave him as his only-begotten Son, a person, not a doctrine; though he did not give him without giving him orders what doctrine to publish: as God gave him, so we are to believe in him; believe *in him*, and *believe on the Son*, *John* 3. 16, 36. We can never apply ourselves to him as the Son of God, without a consideration of his person; we are sanctified *by faith that is in him*, *Acts* 26. 18, not faith in his word severed from his person; and indeed there can be no true faith in Christ, if he be not considered in the excellency of his person; the apostle therefore in the beginning of the Hebrews, an epistle written to draw off the Jews from their ceremonies to the Messiah, proposes him in his dignity and grandeur, *Heb.* 1.

As the Deity in its excellency is the ultimate object, so Christ in his eminency is the immediate object of faith. Faith respects Christ dying and meriting by his death, which it cannot do, unless it considers him in the excellency of his person above that of a simple man, even the Son of God sanctified for us. His merit, had it been finite, would have been insufficient for the weight of our souls and the burden of our sins, without the greatness of his person. He is not only man, then he might have fallen as the first Adam did, and left us in the same or a worse condition: he is not only God, then he could have performed no obedience to the law, as being not concerned in it as a subject, but as a law-giver, nor could he have offered any satisfaction to God, as being incapable of suffering in the Deity; but God and man, fit to repair the honour of God and the fallen state of the creature.

Since Christ as crucified is the object of faith, what

significancy would his sufferings have without the considerations of the other, which puts so high a value upon his passion, and communicates so rich an efficacy to it? We are to believe in Christ for the remission of sin, which is obtained not so much by the sacrifice, as by the quality of the sacrifice. The Jews searched for their expiation in the bowels of beasts, incapable of making an atonement for them. The nature of the sacrifice must be first considered, and that we cannot have a prospect of, in the value and merit of it, till we fix the eye of our faith upon the greatness of his person, who was thus made a sacrifice for us. Indeed to consider Christ barely in his person, attracts our love more than our recumbency; to consider him barely in his passion, without the excellency of his person, would excite neither faith nor love, but grief and horror; to consider him as suffering for us would attract our love in a way of gratitude, but to consider him as suffering for us, without considering the ability of his person to relieve us by that suffering, would be too weak to elevate our faith to him. Reliance always respects ability, as well as goodness and affection; faith therefore respects the person of Christ immediately, but not absolutely in himself, but as he stands in relation to the Father, as his Son, as his servant.

2. Therefore Christ as *sent* by God is the object of faith, as sent to such an end as *redemption*. Faith rests upon Christ as a gift, upon God as the donor. There is little comfort in all that Christ did and suffered, unless we respect him as one sent by his Father; it is this fastens our faith on him, and possesses our souls with a confidence in him; this is the magnifying emphasis he himself sets upon his disciples' faith, in his solemn pleas in heaven, if we may judge of them by the pattern of them he gave us on earth; *They have believed that thou didst send me, John* 17. 8. Christ as sent is the object of faith, since the love of God in sending Christ is urged as the encouragement

to faith, *John* 3. 16. Though faith fixes upon the propitiating blood of Christ, yet it is under this consideration, that he was set forth by God for such an end; *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, *Rom.* 3. 25; this is necessary to the formal condition of faith in its closing and justifying act, without which it would be a lifeless and comfortless thing; for faith justifies us before God as a judge; but can any thing be confidently and comfortably pleaded by a criminal, who doubts the judge's approbation of it?

The allowance of God as a Judge upon the propitiation of Christ heartens faith in its act; it would wholly droop, nay, not go a step, if it did not see God's authority in Christ's action and passion; it considers Christ not only as a Redeemer, but a Redeemer by commission; and carries God's commission to Christ in its hand in every address to the throne of grace for justifying mercy. If a pardon be proclaimed to those that shall come to such an inferior magistrate, no man would come, but upon the strength of the declaration of the supreme authority which made that proclamation, and can only make it valid for a rebel's safety. This is so necessary a part of the object of faith, that no true grounded and well-built faith can be without it; when our eyes have respect to the Holy One of *Israel, we must look to our Maker.*

I question whether if an Israelite bitten by a fiery serpent had looked upon the brazen one, lifted up on the pole, only to contemplate the figure, and the ingenuity of the artificer, without considering the end for which Moses had set it up in relation to his cure, and the divine appointment of it, he would have found from it any remedy for his distemper; natural influence it had none, and moral influence supposes a suitable apprehension in the spectator: I am sure an ancient so paraphrases; *When he looks upon it, he*

shall live, Numb. 21. 8, 9 : * " He shall live, if his heart be directed to the name of the word of the Lord: and so ver. 9. When he looked upon the brazen serpent, and his heart was intent upon the name of the word of the Lord, he did live;" his look was to be not only to the elevated serpent, but to the divine authority that ordered it.

3. Christ in all his *offices: Believe also in me*, without any limitation, or restriction to this, or that particular office. If faith fix upon the person of Christ, and the person of Christ as authorized by God; it embraces Christ with all his offices, because his person is invested with them, and the same authority which settled him in one, conferred upon him the rest. True faith rests upon his person as commissioned, and receives him in the extent of his commission, and therefore in every office distinctly, to be given up to his rule, sit under his instructions, and eat and drink of his sacrifice; his person is not separated from his offices, nor his offices from one another; nor is there a distinct commission for each of them. As faith takes God with all his perfections, so it takes Christ with all his dignities; as when we believe in God, we believe in him with all his attributes, so when we believe in Christ, we believe in him with all his excellencies; *as you believe in God, believe also in me*; you do not take God to be your God, only in his power or mercy, goodness, or faithfulness, or wisdom, but in all; so you must not take me to be Messiah, anointed for you to a priesthood only, but to a kingly and prophetical office.

Christ is proposed as a whole Saviour, and therefore must be received as such; God does not offer him in pieces, but entire; he is not a priest without being a king, nor a prophet without being a king and a priest. As faith is exercised for justification,

* Jonathan Targum in loc.

Christ is considered as a priest; as it is exercised for an understanding of God, he is considered as a prophet; as it is exercised for sanctification, to put down the dominion of sin, and relics of corruption, he is considered as a king, advanced to put all enemies under his feet. Our necessities require such acts of faith upon his distinct offices; we are full of guilt and filth, and we must have Christ as our priest to secure us by his sacrifice from the merit of our guilt, and wash us by his blood from the defilements of our filth; we are beset and inlaid with darkness, and we must have Christ by his wisdom to shew us the way, and conduct us in saving paths; we are possessed with a stubborness and impotency, and we must believe in Christ as a king to quell our enmity, and strengthen our weakness by his power. The ingenuity of faith speaks this language; Since Christ is a priest to sacrifice for me, it is but reasonable he should be my prophet to teach me, and my king to govern me; that as I live by his blood, I should walk by his rule; receive every ray of light, suck in every spiritual direction, as well as feed upon the juice of his sacrifice.

4. Yet Christ as *crucified* is the more immediate object of faith. He had spoke of his death in the foregoing chapter, which was the occasion of their sorrow; and now he speaks of their believing in him: *You believe in God* as a living God, *believe also in me* as a dying Saviour. We are to receive Christ as God offers him to us, as a Redeemer from eternal death, and the purchaser of eternal life; and this he does in the quality of a sacrifice satisfying for our sin, and meriting our life; *He is set out as a propitiation, Rom.* 3. 25; as one in whom God is well pleased. It is faith therefore in his blood that justifies, ver. 24, not faith in his precept, nor faith in his miracles, nor abstractedly faith in his person, but faith in him as bathed in his own blood, and rolling in his own gore. The other parts are but conductors of

faith to this fountain, wherein it washes the soul; to this throne, whereon faith sits triumphantly, and never sparkles with such a life, as in this. Faith in the latitude of it, extends to all parts of scripture, and as it is a general faith, is exercised about precepts, promises, and threatenings; but in its acts about those objects, it is not a justifying faith, but only as it respects Christ, and Christ too in the very act of expiating sin by his satisfactory death on the cross; as the soul of a man exercises itself in vegetation and sense, yet a man is not said to be a rational creature by those acts, or by those powers of the soul, but by the soul, as it is rational.

(1.) This was proposed as the *formal object* in the first promise, *Gen.* 3. 15. As having his heel bruised by the devil, as well as bruising the devil's head: this promise was the great charter of our redemption, and the foundation of the faith of Adam's posterity for several ages. It was indeed spoke to the serpent, but for the sake of man; a threatening to the tempter, and a promise to the tempted; and an argument of terror to the first, and support to the latter; Christ is here proposed for men's comfort, under the notion of a conqueror, but yet under the notion of a sufferer: his passion was to precede his breaking the head of the serpent; so his sufferings are first to be eyed by faith, before his victory. The devil could not be overcome, and stripped of his power, but by a satisfaction to the broken law; which could not be only by observing the precept without suffering the penalty. His authority was built upon the curse of the law, which must be endured, before the devil could be turned out of his palace. It was upon the cross that principalities and powers were stripped of their dominion, and exposed in triumph, *Col.* 2. 15; and in this promise, though the seed of the woman be proposed to their faith, as one to be bruised, yet not as one to be conquered, but as prevalent and triumphant, bruising the enemy in the head and vital part, while himself is only bruised

in the heel; a part remote from the heart, and more remote from the head. The ancients therefore in sucking the sweet juice of this gracious word, could not but consider Christ as combating, as well as conquering; the Messiah suffering something from the serpent, as well as defeating and surviving him.

(2.) Christ under this notion was proposed *in all the Jewish sacrifices.* As the promise was a publication of Christ to faith in a suffering condition; so the sacrifices were a publication of Christ to sense in the kind of his sufferings, in a dying posture. It was more than once expressed to the Israelites, that sacrifices were appointed for the atonement of sin; they must be exceeding blind, if they could persuade themselves that any such expiation of sin could be wrought by any value in the blood of a beast, that that could bear a proportion to the injured honour of God, and the broken tables of the law; they could not but conceive something mysterious in them; and the more inquisitive it is like, perceived some analogy between the type and thing signified by it; they might read something of a suffering Messiah in them for the atonement of their sins; but they could never be instructed by the dying groans and heart-blood of beasts, to fancy such a triumphant Messiah as they did, without being exposed to a calamitous condition. It is certain, Christ as a sacrifice was proposed in all those sin-offerings; they were all but legal *shadows of the good things to come* by the great sacrifice, *Heb.* 10. 1. Our faith ought not less to fix upon Christ as a crucified sacrifice offered to God, than theirs was to look to him under that consideration in every beast, in every lamb slain, and offered upon the altar. He was not shadowed in those sacrifices in the glories of his person, the miracle of his resurrection, the triumphs of his ascension, and his honours at the right hand of God; but in the agonies of his bitter passion, represented by the strugglings and dying gasps of the slain vic-

tim; these sacrifices had no analogy, but with his death.

(3.) This was *proposed by the apostles* in their preaching. It was Paul's practice among the Corinthians. *He determined to know nothing among them*, i. e. to make known nothing as the object of the faith he invited them to, *save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 2. His design was to manifest Christ in the glory of his person, in the excellency of his natures, in the end of his coming; but more especially as crucified; being under that consideration, the fountain of their salvation, and most proper for the exercise of their faith. And when he heard of the Galatians' departure from the truth, he wonders at it, since Christ had been *evidently set forth crucified among them*, *Gal.* 3. 1. It was an astonishment to him, that they should imagine to find a remedy for their guilt, a sanctuary for their souls, a screen against the justice of God, any where else but in the cross of Christ. Christ as crucified was in all their preaching proposed as the object of faith, security from punishment, and way to happiness. Believing in Christ, is called *eating of the altar*, *Heb.* 13. 10, i. e. of the sacrifice which had been offered on the altar the apostle speaking in legal terms; in some sacrifices part was burned upon the altar, and part reserved for a feast for the offerer and his friends, they eat it in the relation of a sacrifice; and Christ can be fed on by faith only under the consideration of a sacrifice, as a dying sacrifice, before he be considered as a living Saviour.

(4.) Under this consideration will the faith of the *Jews fix upon him*, when God shall be pleased to convert them. Christ as pierced, is to be looked upon; *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced*, *Zech.* 12. 10, 11. They that did actually pierce him, shall look upon him so with an eye of faith, planted in them by the Spirit of grace; and he that was pierced for their sins, shall be seen and owned by

them; it is a look of belief, not a bodily look; they shall look upon him so as to rest in him; they shall look upon him as pierced, as their predecessors did look upon the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, with a reliance on the promise of God, that they should have the restoration of their health, and the expulsion of their venom by it. He will be acknowledged in the great intent of his death, which was to take away sin.

(5.) That is the object of our faith, which is *God's object in justifying a sinner.* But God in his justifying act particularly looks upon his blood; *Being now justified by his blood, Rom.* 5. 9. He speaks of God's act of justifying, as he does in the expression of God's act in saving us; in the act of justification, God looks upon the sinner as bedewed and sprinkled with this blood; he crosses not one of our debts without first dipping his pen in this blood: Christ therefore as dying, and paying the price of his precious blood for our redemption, is the immediate object of faith. Christ as risen is an object of faith successively to this: the payment of a debt is really the ground of the justification and security of him for whom that debt is paid: the acquittance is only the declaration of the payment, if the debtor should be questioned afterwards. It was this sacrifice God took the sole pleasure in. *Offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, Heb.* 10. 8; not in any offered by the law, which the apostle adds in a parenthesis; intimating thereby, that this great offering was the only delight of his soul, and in this offering of the body of Christ, his whole will for our sanctification centred, as it follows, ver. 9, 10. Our faith must therefore bear some parallel with the pleasure and will of God, and wrap itself up in the same object.

The blood of Christ is that whereby we are justified; for we are pronounced justified by God upon the account of a righteousness answering the law; but Christ as a king, and Christ as a

prophet, did not answer either the precept or penalty of the law, but Christ as a priest. This therefore whereby God justifies, is considered by faith in its going out for justification; this only can expel fears, and be a ground of the greatest consolation; this was that, God's heart was chiefly set upon; this was that he called him out to perform; he had never been a king, nor a prophet, had he not acted the part of a priest, nor had God justified any, but upon that account of his sacrifice; it was in this office God confirmed him for ever with so much delight, as to engage himself by oath to the perpetuating of it; he was not so solemnly by oath invested in the other two.

(6.) *Nothing else of Christ can* be the immediate and primary object of our faith, but his death. Nothing else but the priestly office of Christ, and his propitiation and atonement he hath made for sin, (and thereby delivered us from the wrath to come) can be the formal object of faith in its first application. There are many things in Christ that faith afterwards considers, and that are worthy of our deepest enquiries and meditations; but this only is considered in the first application. What did the poor stung Israelites consider in their looking upon the brazen serpent? Did they consider it only as the figure of a serpent, or let their minds run out upon the excellency of the figure, the skill of the artificer, and the curiosity of the workmanship? These indeed to a sound man would have been a delightful employment; but as soon as ever he had been bitten, he would have laid aside all such thoughts, and cast his eye upon it, according to the intent of its elevation on the pole for the cure of his disease.

What did the poor malefactor consider in his distress, when he ran to the horns of the altar? He considered it only as a place of refuge, and not as a place of worship. A man in the first act of faith considers himself guilty before God, and in danger of eternal fire,

under the dreadful displeasure of God, by reason of his transgression of the law, he considers himself a breaker of that law, and consequently under the threatening and curse of it; and wishes for security from that fire, his conscience by virtue of a violated law, flashes in his face. That therefore which prompts a man in this condition to go to Christ, is the belief and hope of a sure deliverance by him: his great intendment is justification, freedom, and deliverance; and therefore he eyes Christ as a deliverer, and in that posture and method wherein he was a deliverer; i. e. as hanging upon the cross. Indeed afterwards, when the soul comes to consider its own ignorance and pollution, and longs for sanctification; then its faith goes out to Christ as a prophet to instruct him, and as a king to defeat his enemies in him.

But to a soul sensible of the guilt of sin, and racked by the horrors of conscience, what is most convenient to be proposed? Would you set forth Christ in his glories, as a king that must be obeyed? This strikes the soul dead; what would his answer be? The more able to damn me for my disobedience; a king, say you, to be obeyed? What is this to me that have disobeyed him, that find no power in myself to obey him; and if I could, I cannot upon a diligent scrutiny find any merit in that obedience? But if there were, how can I wipe off my former scores? and pacify God for my manifold past errors, and please his offended holiness? Would you propose Christ as a prophet to teach him his duty? What is this to the curse? How shall I be rid of my guilt? How shall I escape punishment? But propose Christ as a priest and sacrifice: set him forth in his priestly attire, with the streams of blood issuing from him for the expiation of guilt. This will make a soul that has all the flames of hell about his ears, listen: here is an offer of Christ in a suitable capacity to the present state and wants of a sinner. What is the language of a poor soul at first? How can I endure wrath? How can I satisfy

justice? The proposal of Christ as having undertaken this work for him, and becoming sin in his stead, is the only proportionable remedy.

It is then, and not till then, that the soul rests upon him; here I find the satisfaction of my soul, where God found the satisfaction of his justice; this contents me under the charge of a violated law, the dread of an incensed God, the tortures of an enraged conscience; here I find a surety satisfying my debts, bearing my punishment, and interposing himself between me, and the wrath I merit; here I find that which pacifies God, and pacifies me. This gives rest to the soul. The day of atonement among the Israelites, which typified this great saving expiation by the death of the Messiah, is called not God's sabbath, but *your sabbath*, *Levit.* 23. 32. Here, and here alone, is the rest that faith finds in its first search.

Christ as a king, and Christ as a prophet did not merit, and therefore Christ as a king, and Christ as a prophet, are not considered in the first act of seeking after justification, but Christ as meriting, and therefore Christ as a priest and a sacrifice; as a king he rules, as a prophet he instructs, as a priest he merits; Christ does not profit us but as dying, and all the benefits we have by him were radically in his death; hereby he satisfied the curse of the law, which was the only bar to our restoration to happiness, this was the main thing he was to do by articles drawn between the Father and himself; so that upon this account, this death, or Christ as dying, is the main object of faith.

(7.) Nothing can continue and *keep life in faith afterwards*, but Christ considered as dying. Since there are slips and new pollutions, faith in all its acts for continuance of justification, and repeated pardons, goes afresh to the embraces of the cross, and pleads the merits of Christ's wounds and agonies: it looks upon the *Lamb of God as taking away the sins of the world*, and begs the favour of God for the merits of Christ.

As Christ dying is the object of the first act of faith, so he is the encouragement to a continuance in faith; for he hath in so high a manner evidenced himself merciful and faithful in this, that there is no doubt of his mercifulness and faithfulness in every thing that concerns us after; he has declared himself worthy of our most fixed reliance on him, and that he will not hesitate at lesser things, since he has undertaken and finished so great a task as that of suffering. From his priesthood faith takes spirit and heart to go to him as king and prophet, which it could never do if it did not first receive encouragements from hence, and first fixed upon it; for (as I said before) as all the after benefits of Christ are radically in his death, so all the after acts of faith upon Christ in any other condition, are radically in this first act of faith upon Christ as a sacrifice, which first act gives life to all the exercises of faith upon Christ in another capacity afterwards.

To conclude: The death of Christ as it is *satisfactory to God*, is the object of faith, as it is of infinite efficacy and perpetual force, it is the object of a triumphant faith and hope. The righteousness of Christ in his death is to be considered in all this; if we take him as a sacrifice, we must take him as a spotless sacrifice. If as a priest, as an undefiled one, separate from sinners, as well as for sinners. We cannot believe in Christ without taking in his righteousness, as we cannot behold the sun without beholding its light.

5. Christ as *risen and exalted* is the object of faith. He is the immediate object of faith as dying, the triumphant object of faith as rising. His sacrifice was in his death, but the value and virtue of that sacrifice was manifest by his resurrection. Had Christ left his body in the grave, and had sins committed before been pardoned upon the atonement he made by his death; yet the sacrifice ceasing and corrupting, it had not been of everlasting efficacy. If God as raising

Christ from the dead is the object of faith; *If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*, Rom. 4. 24, 25; then Christ as raised by God is the object of faith also; he was *raised* from the grave *for our justification*, as well as *delivered* to the cross *for our offences*. As in his death in our stead he bore the curse of the law, so in his resurrection as a common person, we received our acquittal from the hands of the judge. Though his resurrection was not meritorious of our justification, yet it was a declaration of the efficacy of his death, and consequently of our discharge. Faith must eye that whereby we are justified; now though we are justified by Christ's death as the *meritorious* cause, yet we are justified by his resurrection, as the *perficient* cause.

Had his death been supposed to be fully meritorious without a resurrection, it had freed us from death by cancelling the bond; but his resurrection instates us in life by God's gracious acceptation, and makes the redemption complete, which else had been but a partial one; nay, none at all. To the one we owe our freedom for death, to the other our investiture with eternal life and glory: to the one we owe our righteousness, to the other our sonship. It is by *his resurrection from the dead* we are *begotten to a lively hope*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 3; it is upon him therefore as raised that our faith must be settled. Had he not risen, we had been still in our sins, not a mite of our debts had ever appeared to have been paid, 1 *Cor.* 15. 17, his death had been insufficient for our happiness, without his resurrection. His resurrection was an evidence that he could save others, since he was delivered himself, and that his Father would save the members since he had raised the head. Had he not been raised, faith in his death had had no ground, it had been an unaccountable thing to believe in him that lay under the power of death, and had not sufficient strength

to shake off the bands of it. This is the key that unlocks to us the whole design, end, and sufficiency of his death, and renders faith in him as crucified more easy.

Every thing in Christ, every thing promised by him, is very credible, nothing can be matter of any difficulty to faith, since this of his resurrection is perfected. Faith is therefore called the *faith of the operation of God*, *Col.* 2. 12, noting the object of faith, and not the efficient cause of it, not because God works it in us; though that be true, yet it is not the sense of the place. But a faith of that energy and mighty power God put forth, in the raising Christ from the dead; it was by this act whereby he fulfilled his past promises, that he gives us security for the performance of future ones. *For as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he saith on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David*, *Acts* 13. 34. What were those sure mercies of David given in this? The *fulfilling of the promise made to the fathers*, ver. 32. 33. The promise of an *everlasting covenant*, *Isa.* 55. 3, whence this is cited. That grand promise God made to Adam, and in him to all his posterity, was fulfilled in this act of Christ's resurrection, the bruising the serpent's head, the blessing all nations in the seed of Abraham, the bringing in an everlasting righteousness were declared thereby to be fulfilled. Hereby was the efficacy of his death cleared to all the world, in his being eased of the burden of our sins, which bowed down his head upon the cross; hereby it was manifest that his blood was *the blood of the everlasting covenant*, *Heb.* 13. 20. A blood establishing and settling the covenant of grace for ever, and making it truly everlasting. As our redemption was not in its meridian glory till his resurrection, so neither is our faith in its full strength and vigour, but as eyeing this together with his death.

PART IV.

THE SUBJECT IMPROVED.

Evidence of the Deity of Christ—Difference between the law and the gospel—The comfort of believing—Examination of faith—Exhortation—Salvation by believing—Faith in Christ essential to faith in promises—The only fit object of faith—Must be believed in solely—Fully—Constantly—Advantages of meditation on the object of faith.

First. IF God and Christ in *conjunction* be the proper object of faith, here is an argument for the Deity of Christ. If he be a mere creature, how can he assert himself an object of faith in conjunction with the eternal God? It would be the highest invasion of the right and authority, and affront to the perfection and sufficiency of God, to make himself equal with God as the object of our faith, if he were not equal with God in the dignity of his nature. He every where proposes himself in this consideration to us: *This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent*, *John* 6. 29. It is not a belief of Christ, but a belief in Christ or on Christ, to believe a person is one thing, and to believe on him is another; we believe Paul and Peter, but are never said to believe in Paul or in Peter; the devils cannot

but believe what Christ says to be true, but they do not believe in him. To be believed in or relied upon for salvation and pardon, is proper only to the Deity, and a flower of his crown.

If Christ were a mere man, though he were in the highest throne of excellency and holiness as a creature, as indeed he is; yet he could not be an object of our trust and faith without an offence to God, a violation of his precept, and contracting his curse; he doth expressly threaten to lay his curse upon every one that *makes flesh his arm*, or confides in man, because that is a *departure from the Lord*, *Jer.* 17. 5, and promises a blessing to them *that trust in the Lord and make him their hope*, *ver.* 7. If he be liable to the curse, that puts his trust in man solely for worldly advantage, much more he that puts his trust in a mere man for an eternal salvation; he pronounces a curse on them that put their trust in man, but a blessing on them that put their trust in his Son the Messiah; *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him, Psal.* 2. 12.

If Christ were a mere man, we are cursed by God for trusting in him; if blessed for putting a confidence in him, then he is more than a man, the true God. He that was obedient to his Father, would never have ordered such an act wherein we should be accursed by the Father. God would never have backed this proposition of faith in Christ, asserted by Christ himself, and preached by the apostles, with the seal of so many miracles, and justified that which he had cursed before. He would never have cast the crown from his own head, or made another partner with him, had he not a dignity in his own nature equal with God. If *God our Saviour and Jesus Christ* be the joint objects of hope, 1 *Tim.* 1. 1; if *those that believe in him, shall not be ashamed*, *Rom.* 9. 33, it is a blasphemy to say he is a mere man, a mere creature, and not God, since a sovereign prerogative of God is

ascribed to him; we should otherwise meet with a curse rather than a blessing by relying on him.

Secondly. The *difference* between the law and the gospel. The law orders a trust in God, but utters not a syllable of a restoring Mediator upon the entrance of sin, and therefore exacts not from us such a kind of faith as this, which is necessary for our happiness since we are fallen. The law cannot order such an act, but it must also present the object of that act, it speaks nothing of the latter and therefore enjoins nothing of the former. It represented God as a sovereign and judge, not as a merciful pardoner; as a revenger upon transgression, not as a Redeemer and restorer. The law is therefore insufficient to save us; our happiness is wrapped up solely in the gospel; we have no safety but in the arms of a Mediator, faith is wholly a gospel grace and a new covenant duty.

Thirdly. Comfort. Believe also in me. What does this signify, but that our faith in Christ will be effectual for our good as our faith in God? He was too faithful to his Father to invade his rights, and too merciful to us to put us upon a fruitless act; his joining himself with God as the object of faith, shows that our faith in him will be as prevalent as our faith in God, and our happiness be as mount Sion not to be shaken, *for he that believes in him shall not be ashamed, Rom. 9. 33.* He had never commanded us to believe in him as we do in God, if he had not had an office to relieve us; it intimates, that both God and the Mediator are in conjunction for our salvation and felicity. Do we believe God to be merciful, powerful, gracious? The Mediator also has as tender a compassion to pity us, and as sovereign a grace to heal us; as ardent a love to bless us, and as infinite a power to rescue us; as overflowing a peace to quiet us, and as everflowing a goodness to relieve and perfect us. If they are jointly to be respected by our

faith, they are joint also in the answering the expectations of our faith; *I and my Father are one*, *John* 10. 30. One in saving, one in preserving, one in perfecting, for it is spoken in relation to the perpetual preservation of his people to salvation, *None shall pluck them out of my hand, none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand*; we grasp them both by faith, and they grasp one another's hand for our safety; we lay hold both on the Father and the Son by an act of faith, and both Father and Son lay hold on us by an act of particular affection; as we own them, so they will prove in the end joint Saviours to our faith. As they are one in power, so they are one in the cares of the flock. Christ would never else have ordered us to pitch our faith as strongly and fully upon him as upon the Father.

Again: *Believe also in me.* He requires a true faith, as true in him as in God, but not an equal measure of faith in all. If we have not a faith of such a stature and growth, as that of Paul or the other apostles, yet if it have the same mein and lineaments, it will not be ineffectual. The serpent was to be looked upon, but not by all with an equal clearness of sight, some eyes were dimmer, some clearer; a look was sufficient though but a weak one; A tender-eyed Leah might have been cured by a look as well as a sharp-sighted Rachel. *Believe in me*, close with me, though your hands may not be equally strong to hold fast as others are. No man's spirit is always in an equal degree of health, and an even complexion, the wheels do not always move with an equal swiftness; reflections on a state of sin, and the blackness of transgressions, sometimes make us shrink and tremble; the wonderful greatness of God's mercy, like the light of the sun, sometimes dazzles and blinds our eye. Yet if we believe in him with all these defects, it will go well with us. It is believe in me, not ordering all faith to be of the same elevation.

Fourthly. Let us *examine* our faith by the object.

Many will speak carelessly, and many will boast confidently of their faith and trust in God, and scarce ever think or speak of Christ, separating that which God hath joined. What warrant have we to trust in God singly considered without a Mediator? As it is eternal life to *know him*, not in the simplicity of his own being, but as he makes himself visible in a Mediator, *John* 17. 3; so it is to believe in him in the same manner: as our knowledge of God with our ignorance of Christ, so our faith in God, with an unbelief in Christ, will never entitle to an eternity of happiness. No act of faith is right, that does not virtually and implicitly take in Christ, together with God. Our Saviour speaks it here in relation to the troubles of his disciples' hearts for their outward condition, and the misery they expected by his departure from them; you have been educated in a reliance on God, and the expectations of a Messiah: Believe me to be the person, and believe *in* me as the great undertaker and accomplisher of your happiness.

We have a *prospect* of troubles, soon we may feel the smart of them, we believe in God as the sovereign of the world, let us see whether we eye at the same time Christ as the king set upon the holy hill of Sion, for the protection as well as the government of the church. We have a great deal of ignorance, we believe in God as the Father of lights; do we also believe in Christ as a prophet to instruct us, and a sun of righteousness to enlighten and heal us with his wings? We believe in God as infinitely merciful, do we also believe in Christ as a priest settled for ever to make an atonement by his sacrifice, and perpetuate the application of it by his intercession? We have no warrant to exert one act of faith on the one without the other: by faith in God singly without a Mediator, we neither obey God nor secure ourselves.

Since the object of faith is Christ as dying, true faith must eye the motive which persuaded Christ to die, and have the same motive in itself, viz. the ha-

tred of sin and the love of righteousness, the hatred both of guilt and filth, and a desire to vindicate the righteousness of God: the hatred of sin is therefore necessary in our compliance with Christ, and therefore believers are called his *fellows*, *Heb.* 1. 9, not only fellows in his glory, but in his disposition; in the integrity of it, not in the degrees of it.

Faith rests upon Christ as the gift, upon God as the donor; it considers the greatness of the gift, and with delight ascends to a confidence in the giver; it reads God's heart in Christ, sees the glory of God in the face of Christ, and mounts up to clasp about him, who hath issued out the knowledge of himself in such a full spring of mercy and grace. It looks upon Christ as a propitiator, and upon God as a Father. Faith hath recourse to the atoning blood of Christ, and by that blood to God. The goodness of faith consists chiefly in the object it is placed upon; as all acts receive their goodness from the object, as well as from the principal end and circumstances.

Fifthly. Exhortation. Let us observe his *order*. We do believe in God, that is taken for granted: there is indeed a natural confidence that all men have explicitly or implicitly in God; *He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth*, *Psa.* 65. 5. This is not sufficient; a faith in Christ as Mediator, a belief of it, a reliance on him in that capacity, together with a walking according to the rules of his prophetic office, is the whole of the christian religion; this is every man's duty, as much his duty to believe in Christ as to believe in God, it is enjoined with the same authority, *Believe also in me*, it is a command as well as an invitation. Not, *believe if you will*, but *you must believe* in me as well as in God, if ever you have a security against troubles here or hereafter; to believe is not only our privilege but our duty; not to believe, is not only our misery but our sin, it is not a matter of indifference. Christ had a command from God

to die for us, and we have a command from himself to believe in him.

God will have every one *confess to the glory of the Father*, that *Jesus is the Lord, Phil.* 2. 11. God in him hath discovered the wonders of his mercy, justice, and wisdom, and without believing in him we disown God in the glory of those discovered perfections. *He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father that hath sent him, John* 5. 22, 23. He that believes not in the Son, believes not in the Father, whatever vain imaginations he wraps himself in; he that believes not in Christ satisfying, believes not in the Father satisfied. As God goes out to us in him, our return must be by him to God. God was the Judge, Christ the Mediator, we must first go to the Mediator to be conducted to the Judge for our sentence of absolution; we have offended the sovereign Lawgiver, we must first believe in him who is the repairer of the honour of the law. Our standing is not secure by absolute mercy; mercy through Christ only saves us; it breathes in no other air: we must first lay hold of the *strength* of God before we can be at *peace* with him, *Isa.* 27. 5. Take hold of Christ, who is the *power* as well as the *wisdom of God*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 24.

1. All our salvation comes in by *believing* in Christ. We can have no satisfaction but in this way, we cannot answer the terms of the law but by our surety, nor the demands of the gospel but by our faith in him. Do not our own hearts often disquiet us? Does not the perfect law amaze us? Does the devil never accuse us? Do our own consciences never charge us? Where can we find a peace for ourselves, a discharge against the law, and an answer to Satan, but by faith in him who has indicated the law, conquered our enemy, and has blood enough to besprinkle our consciences with an eternal peace? Paul had tried all other ways that were of vogue in the Jewish

church, but met with nothing that could have a just pretence to be a competitor with Christ. With what joy did Andrew meet Peter with the news, *We have found the Messiah? John* 1. 41. Nothing can contribute such a measure of peace and joy to the soul as faith in Christ: there is not indeed an ear to be gleaned any where else; all is laid up in that garner: God cannot now save us in a way of absolute mercy, since he has settled the method of our salvation by faith in his Son; it would be against his truth, his wisdom, and also against the honour of his obedient Son; if he would save one by absolute mercy, why not more, why not all? What need then of his Son's sufferings to make the purchase?

2. We cannot believe *any promise* without believing in Christ. As the promises are confirmed and conveyed to us, so must our faith be exercised about them; there is not a promise that is *yea and amen*, i. e. firm and irreversible, but in Christ, 2 *Cor.* 1. 20. It is in Christ; it is in Christ that our faith must be exercised in every promise, upon the promise in Christ, upon Christ in the promise, we else believe and depend upon them without their confirmation. No man will depend upon a deed and conveyance without the seal; look first to the seal, and then, and not till then, will the promise pour out comfort to the soul.

3. He *only is fit* to be the immediate object of our faith. As he is the *mighty God* and the *Prince of Peace* as well as *a Son given, Isa.* 9. 6, as he made a suitable compensation for the offenders in regard of the human nature, which had committed the trespass, and as he made a sufficient compensation in regard of the divine nature, which had been injured by sin. Infinite justice was satisfied by an infinite person. He only is fit to be the immediate object of our faith whose shoulders bore the weightiest

burdens, whose head bowed under the sharpest curses, whose soul drunk down the bitterest potions in our stead. He had all the fitness to answer the demands of God, and all the fulness to answer the indigencies of man; he has an office, and himself furnished both with ability and compassion for the execution of it; he has a wisdom not to be ignorant of what he is to do, and an integrity not to be false in it. Let us therefore according to his own order believe in him in conjunction with God.

1. *Solely. In me*, without joining any created thing with me. We must strike off our hands from all other purchases but that of the pearl. It is not, believe in me and your own righteousness, though it appear in the utmost glory: not, believe in me and your own hearts, though they smile upon you never so kindly. *You believe in God:* it does not follow, believe in me and your own righteousness, believe in me and saints, in Abraham, Jacob, David, or Elijah; but believe in me alone, without the conjunction of any thing less than a Deity. No other lamb but this was *slain from the foundation of the world:* this is the only *seed of the woman* that was included in the promise: none else was the centre of the prophecies, the subject of the promises, the truth of the types; none in conjunction with him, none in subordination to him in the work of mediation and satisfaction: he only is the first-born among many brethren. As the eye seeks for no other light than that of the sun, and joins no candles with it to dishonour the sufficiency of its beams, so no created thing must be joined with Christ as an object of faith; this is a dishonour to the strength of the rock which is our only foundation, this is to undervalue the greatness of the gift, and the wisdom of the giver.

It is a *folly* to seek for security any where else. Who would join the weakness of a bulrush with the strength of a rock for his protection? Who would

fetch water from a muddy pond, to make a pure fountain in his own garden more pleasant? All other things are broken reeds under the most splendid appearances: address yourselves only to him, to find a medicine for your miseries, and counsel in your troubles. Believe in him as the power of God under the weight of your guilt. Believe in him as the wisdom of God under the darkness of your ignorance. He alone is sufficient for our redemption by the allowance of God, and therefore the sole object of faith in conjunction with God. Let us live a life of faith only in him as Paul did, *Gal.* 2. 20. This is the vital juice and nourishment of faith, it languishes when it applies to any thing else. We cannot trust him too much, nor ourselves too little. God trusted him alone, therefore should we; he *puts no trust in his saints*, *Job* 15. 15. Not in the highest glory of their saintship. Nothing else comes up to the exactness of the law, nor bears proportion with the holiness of God's nature.

2. Believe in me *wholly*. Not in a part, not in any one particular action of Christ. Nothing of Christ can be well spared by us; he is full and rich, and not any of his fulness or riches but are of use to us: he is necessary in every capacity; the merchant would have his whole pearl, not a part; nothing of Christ is vain and fruitless. God has given us nothing in the creation but what we may use for his glory; he has stored Christ as a Redeemer with nothing but what we may use for our comfort. We must take whole Christ in his sufferings, as well as Christ in his glory; Christ with his sceptre, as well as Christ with his salvation. True faith will lay hold on every word, on every promise, on every particle of Christ, as the vine will upon every stick in the support which is set for it.

3. *Constantly* believe in me. Not for a time, and by fits and starts; as you always believe in God, so always believe in me; as you do not cast God off from being your confidence, so do not in the least wave me from being your hope. Upon all occasions when storms arise in the world, believe in me as your protector, as your conductor; when racks appear to be set up in your consciences, believe in me as your peace-maker: when corruptions creep up and defile you, believe in me as a refiner. The woman of Canaan would not leave her faith in him, though he spoke a word sour enough to make her turn her back in sorrow upon him. Let not an act of faith be exercised in God, but let there be a mixture of an equal quantity of faith in the Mediator; the word spoken to us does not profit us unless mixed with faith, nor do any of our returns to God please him unless mixed with faith in the Redeemer. Whenever we exert a particular act of faith in God, let us exert a particular act of faith in Christ too; not look upon the one without the other, nor embrace the one without the other. We are as constantly to honour the Son as to honour the Father.

Let us therefore frequently meditate on this object of faith, view every wound of a dying Saviour; it will increase our faith in him, add a new life to our faith in God. Our faith is feeble, and our souls languish under spiritual burdens, because we do not look to him as lifted up upon the cross; our addresses to God are faint, fearful, and disturbed, because our eye is not fixed upon the Mediator, who has changed God from the frightful garb of a Judge to the pleasing aspect of a Father. By such acts upon this object, our faith will receive a new spirit, a fresh boldness, a pleasant liveliness.

Let us consider him in his person, in his promises, in his offices, in his mediation, in his sacri-

fice, and in the righteousness of all, and we shall find what is here spoken by way of command, to be exemplified in a powerful operation in our hearts, which will make us echo back again, *Our hearts are not troubled, O Lord, since we believe in God, and believe also in thee.*

THE

CLEANSING VIRTUE

OF THE

BLOOD OF CHRIST.

1 *John* 1. 7.

AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN.

PART I.

THE PERPETUAL VIRTUE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Explication of the subject—The blood of Christ morally considered—Cleanseth from guilt and defilement—Cleansing from guilt meritorious—Evidence of it—The credit it obtained before shed—But one Mediator—Early revealed as the only foundation—Fully revealed to the old testament believers—The manner of pardon made known—Patriarchs actually pardoned—Compact between the Father and Son—The sole end of the coming of Christ—The fundamental doctrine of the gospel—Could be no other end in his death but this—Cleanses from sin solely by his own worth—Not perfectly as to the sense of it—Or as to the stirrings of it—But perfectly as to condemnation and punishment—The blood of Christ cleanses from sin universally.

THE apostle in the beginning of the chapter puts the saints, to whom he writes, in mind of the gospel he had writ, wherein he had declared to them that

word of life which had been with the Father, and was manifested to the world; and which he now declares again, that they might have a fellowship with the apostles in the truth, and not with the false teachers in their errors: and for an incentive, assures them that the fellowship of those that kept the truth as it is in Jesus, was *with the Father and with the Son; That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*, ver. 3. With the Father, as the source and spring of eternal life and happiness; with the Son as Mediator, who hath opened the way to us, removed the bars, and given us an access to, and a communion with the Father. For by sin we were alienated from God, our sin had caused justice to lock up the gates of paradise, and forbid such guilty and polluted offenders to approach to the pure majesty of God.

The apostle, to encourage them to cleave to the gospel, proposes to them a fellowship with God by the means of Jesus Christ his Son, and our Mediator, as the chief happiness and felicity of man, and that which can only afford them a full and complete joy. And afterwards, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all*, ver. 5. He prescribes to them the means whereby they may keep up a communion with God, which he infers from the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, who is light; light in regard of the clearness of his knowledge, light in regard of his unstained purity, not tainted with the least spot or dust of evil; not having any thing unworthy in his nature, nor doing any thing unbecoming in his actions.

If therefore our conversation be in darkness, if we wallow in the mire of any untamed, unmortified lust; whatsoever our evangelical professions may be, or howsoever we may fancy ourselves entered into a fel-

lowship with the Father by the means of the Mediator, it is but a lying imagination; for how can there be a communion between two natures so different? Between light and darkness, purity and impurity, heaven and hell, God and the devil? But if our conversation be agreeable to gospel precepts, we have then a fellowship with him; *If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*, ver. 7, i. e. God hath a fellowship with us in affection and delight, and we have a fellowship with God in salvation and happiness: God gives himself to us, and we give ourselves to God. He bestows grace and pardon on us, and we resign up our hearts and affections to him.

And this is a certain proof, that we are interested in the expiatory virtue of the blood of Christ. Or else those latter words may be a prevention of an objection, which might result from the apprehension of the relics of corruption in the best man in this life. Since God is infinitely pure light without darkness, and we have so much darkness mixed with our best light, we must for ever despair of having any fellowship with God; the infinite distance, by reason of our indwelling corruption, will put us out of all hopes of ever attaining such a sovereign felicity, but this reply is prevented by this clause of the apostle: *And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* Let not the sense of your daily infirmities animate any desponding fears. If you order your hearts and lives in all sincerity, according to the gospel-rule, there is a provision made for your security in the blood of Christ. God will wipe off the guilt of your defects by the virtue of that precious blood, which has been shed for your reparation. The apostle here supposes remainders of sin in those that have the privilege of walking with God, and interest in the blessings of the covenant.

The blood of Jesus Christ. By this is meant the last act in the tragedy of his life, his blood being the

ransom of our souls, the price of our redemption, and expiation of our sin. The shedding his blood was the highest, and most excellent part of his obedience, *Phil.* 2. 8. His whole life was a continual suffering, but his death was the top and complement of his obedience; for in that he manifested the greatest love to God, and the highest charity to man. The expiatory sacrifices under the law were always bloody; death was to be endured for sin, and blood was the life of the creature; the blood or death of Christ is the cause of our justification.

His Son. His sonship makes his blood valuable. It is blood, and so agreeable to the law in the penalty: It is the blood of the Son of God, and therefore acceptable to the law-giver in its value. Though it was the blood of the humanity, yet the merit of it was derived from the divinity. It is not his blood as he was the Son of the virgin, but his blood as he was the Son of God, which had this sovereign virtue. It is no wonder therefore that it should have such a mighty efficacy to cleanse the believers in it in all ages of the world, from such vast heaps of guilt, since it is the blood of Christ, who was God; and valuable, not so much for the greatness of the punishment whereby it was shed, as the dignity of the person from whom it flowed. One Son of God weighs more than millions of worlds of angels.

Cleanseth. Cleansing and purging are terms used in scripture for justifying, as well as sanctifying. The apostle interprets washing, of both those acts: *But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,* 1 *Cor.* 6. 11. The latter words are exegetical of the former; they both are the fruits of the merit of the blood of Christ. The one is the act of the Father as a judge appeased by that blood, the other the act of the Spirit, as a sanctifier purchased by that blood. And so the *washing of us in the blood of Christ,* spoken of *Rev.* 1. 5, is to

be understood of justification; sanctification is expressed, by *making us kings and priests to God*, ver. 6, giving us royal and holy natures to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God; and several times the word כפר, which signifies to *expiate, appease*, is translated to *sanctify*, *Exod.* 29. 33, 36, and to cleanse, ver. 37, and a word that signifies cleansing, is sometimes put for justifying; as in the third commandment, *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*, *Exod.* 20. 7, לא ינקה, will not cleanse or purge them. But it must be understood of cleansing from guilt, because it refers to the penalty of the law. It is here used in this sense; it is spoken to them that are sanctified, and have a fellowship with God; that if they walk in the light, God will impute to them the blood of his Son for their absolution from the guilt of all their infirmities.

The blood of Christ cleanseth. 1. It hath a *virtue* to cleanse. It does not actually cleanse all, but only those that believe: nor does it cleanse them from new sins, but upon renewed acts of faith: there is a sufficiency in it to cleanse all, and there is an efficacy in it to cleanse those that have recourse to it. As when we say, a medicine purges such a humour, we understand it of the virtue and quality of the medicine, not that it purges, unless it be taken in, or otherwise applied to the distempered person.

2. *The blood of Christ cleanseth:* not *hath* cleansed, or *shall* cleanse. This notes a continued act. There is a perpetual pleading of it for us, a continual flowing of it to us. It is a *fountain* set *open for sin*, *Zech.* 13. 1. There is a constant streaming of virtue from this blood, as there is of corruption from our nature: it was shed but once, it is applied often, and the virtue of it is as durable as the person whose blood it is.

3. *The blood of Christ cleanseth.* The apostle joins nothing with this blood. It has the sole, and the sovereign virtue. There is no need of tainted merits,

unbloody sacrifices, and terrifying purgatories. The whole of cleansing is ascribed to this blood, not any thing to our own righteousness or works: it admits no partner with it, not the blood of martyrs, nor the intercessions of saints.

4. The blood of Christ cleanseth *us from all sin.* It is an universal remedy. Whatsoever has the nature of sin, sins against the law, and sins against the gospel. It absolves from the guilt of sin, and shelters from the wrath of God. The distinction of venial and moral sins has no footing here, no sin but is mortal without it, no sin so venial but needs it. This blood purges not some sort of sins, and leaves the rest to be expiated by a purgatory fire. This expression of the apostle *of all sin*, is water enough to quench all the flames of purgatory that Rome has kindled; what sins are not expiated by it, are left not to a temporary, but an eternal death; not to a refining, but a consuming fire. So that we see these words are an antidote against fears arising by reason of our infirmities, a cordial against faintings, an encouragement to a holy walk with God.

This is a short, but a full panegyric of the virtue of the blood of Christ. 1. In regard of the effect, cleansing. 2. In regard of the cause of its efficacy. It is the blood of *Jesus*, a Saviour. The blood of Christ, one appointed, anointed by God to be a Jesus; the blood of the Son of God, of one in a special relation to the Father, and his only begotten, beloved Son. 3. In regard of the exactness of it: *all sin.* No guilt so high, but it can master: no stain so deep, but it can purge, being the blood of the Son of God, and therefore of infinite virtue, it hath as much force to demolish mountains of guilt as level mole-hills of iniquity.

The words are a plain doctrine in themselves, that,

First, The blood of Christ has a *perpetual vir-*

tue, and *actually and perfectly cleanses believers from all guilt.* This blood is the expiation of our sin, and the unlocking of our chains, the price of our liberty, and of the purity of our souls. The redemption we have through it, is expressly called the forgiveness of sin. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin*, *Eph.* 1. 7: by a metonymy of the effect for the cause; remission was an effect of redemption. * When the apostle tells, *That by once offering, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*, *Heb.* 10. 14, he places this perfection in the remission of sin, ver. 17, 18; he did in the offering himself so transact our affairs, and settle our concerns with God, that there was no need of any other offerings to eke it out, or patch it up. As the blood of the typical sacrifices purified from ceremonial, so the blood of the antitypical offering purifies from moral uncleanness.

The scripture places remission wholly in this blood of the Redeemer. When Christ makes his will, and institutes his supper, he commends this as our righteousness. *This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*, *Mat.* 26. 28, according to the title and end given it in the prophet. *By* this *blood of the covenant, the prisoners* are delivered from *the pit* of corruption, *wherein there was no water*, *Zech.* 9. 11; no water to quench our thirst, no water to cleanse our souls, but mud and mire to defile them.

This was the *design* of his death; as himself speaks, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name amongst all nations*, *Luke* 24. 46, 47. And Peter in his discourse at Cornelius's house, comprizes in this the intent of the whole scripture; *To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believes in him, shall receive remission of sins*, *Acts* 10. 43. As this was the justifying blood

* Illyricus de Justificat. p. 179.

in the time of the prophets, so it will be the justifying blood to the end of the world. By this blood only the *robes of any are made white*, *Rev.* 7. 14. By this blood the accuser of the brethren is overcome, and cast in his suit, *Rev.* 12. 10, 11: the maintaining of justification by this blood, seems to be the great contest between the true church and the antichristian state.

1. The blood of Christ is to be considered *morally* in this act. The natural end of blood in the veins, is a reparation of the substance of the body, by a conversion of the blood into it. And the proper use of blood is not to cleanse, for it defiles and spots any thing whereon it is dropped; but morally considered, as the shedding of blood implies loss of life, and punishment for a crime, so blood is an expiation of the crime, and a satisfaction to the law for the offence committed against it. As the shedding innocent blood morally pollutes a land, so the shedding the blood of the malefactor and murderer, morally cleanses a land. *Blood defiles the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it*, *Num.* 35. 33. Had not this blood of Christ been shed, our sins had not been pardoned, our souls had not been secured, our chains had continued, and our terrors had been increased; the strokes of justice had been felt, and the face of mercy had been veiled; we had wholly been the vassals of the one, and foreigners to the other.

2. The cleansing is to be *doubly* considered: there is a cleansing from *guilt*, and a cleansing from *filth*, both are the fruits of this blood; the *guilt* is removed by remission, the *filth* by purification. Christ does both, he cleanses us from our guilt as he is our righteousness, from our spot as he is our sanctification, for he is both to us 1 *Cor.* 1. 30. The one upon the account of his merit, the other by his efficacy, which he exerts by his Spirit. The proper intendment of

the blood of Christ, was to take off the curse of the law, and free us from our guilt; the washing off our stains is the proper work of the Spirit, upon that account signified to us by water in the prophets.

The blood and water flowing from the side of Christ upon the cross were distinct, *John* 19. 34, 35, as appears by the great seriousness, wherewith John affirms the relation; *He that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knows that he saith true.* These two liquors flowed from his side distinctly, and did not mingle in their streams; and this seems to be so disposed by the providence of God to signify, that from the death of Christ there flow two sorts of benefits of a different nature, and which ought to be differently considered, viz. sanctification, represented by water destined to washing; and justification, which arises from satisfaction, represented by the blood, shed for remission of sin. These both spring up from the death of Christ, yet they belong to two distinct offices of Christ, he justifies us as a surety, a sacrifice by suffering, as a priest by merit. But he sanctifies us as a king, by sending his Spirit to work efficaciously in our hearts.

When we consider the blood of Christ, we consider Christ as a sacrifice, and sacrifices were called purifications, καθάρματα; not in regard of washing away the defilement, but expiating the guilt of sin; yet indeed the justifying virtue of this blood is never exerted without a sanctifying virtue accompanying it. As blood and water flowed out of the side of Christ together, so blood and water flow into the heart of a sinner together. The typical blood of the covenant, when sprinkled by Moses upon the book and people, was mixed with water, *Heb.* 9. 19, 20, to signify that holiness signified by water, accompanies the application of propitiation signified, by blood. All the force of sin consisted in condemnation, to which it had subjected men as it was a transgression of the law, and in conjunction therewith it had defiled the

soul. Now Christ shed his blood to make an expiation of sin, and sent his Spirit to make a destruction of sin, by virtue of his death there is no condemnation for sin, *Rom.* 8. 1, 3. By virtue of the grace of his Spirit there is no *dominion of sin*, *Rom.* 6. 4, 14.

3. This cleansing from guilt may be considered as *meritorious, or applicative.* As the blood of Christ was offered to God, this purification was meritoriously wrought, as particularly pleaded for a person, it is actually wrought; as sprinkled upon the conscience, it is sensibly wrought. The first merits the removal of guilt, the second solicits it, the third ensures it; the one was wrought upon the cross, the other is acted upon his throne, and the third pronounced in the conscience. The first is expressed, *Rom.* 3. 25. His blood rendered God propitious. The second, *Heb.* 9. 12. As he is entered into the holy of holies. The third, *Heb.* 9. 14. Christ justifies as a sacrifice in a way of merit and when this is pleaded, God justifies as a judge in a way of authority. Christ laid the foundation of a discharge from all guilt upon the cross, and procures an actual discharge upon the first look of a sincere faith towards him, and when this blood is sprinkled upon the conscience, it *purgeth it from dead works*, *Heb.* 9. 14, from the guilt of death we contracted by sinful works, and from the sentence of death which the law pronounced by reason of those works; that thereby we may have a liberty to appear before God, and be fit to serve him.

The sprinkling the tabernacle and the vessels of the sanctuary, and the person officiating in it, was the applying of the propitiation made by the sacrifice to those things, for the special consecration of them unto God. No blood was sprinkled, but the blood of the victim, solemnly offered unto God upon the altar, according to his own appointment; no blood applied to the conscience can cleanse it, but the blood of this great sacrifice, which is peculiarly called *the blood of sprinkling*, as it is the blood of the covenant,

Heb. 12. 24. The virtue of it conveyed as sprinkled, is from the propitiation it made as shed. A not guilty is entered into the court of God when this blood is pleaded, and a not guilty inscribed upon the roll of conscience, when this blood is sprinkled. It appeaseth God's justice, and quencheth wrath: as it is pleaded before his tribunal, it silenceth the accusations of sin; and quells tumults in a wrangling conscience, as it is sprinkled upon the soul.

SECONDLY. The evidence of this truth well appears,

1. From the *credit* it had for the expiation and cleansing of guilt, before it was actually shed, and the reliance of believers in all ages on it. The blood of Christ was applied from the foundation of the world, though it was not shed till the fulness of time. They had the benefit of the promise of redemption, before the accomplishment of the sacrifice for redemption. The cleansing we have now is upon the account of the blood of Christ already shed; the cleansing they had then was upon the account of the blood of Christ in time to be shed; the one respects it as past, the other as future. * We must distinguish the virtue of redemption from the work of redemption, the work was appointed in a certain time, but the virtue was not restrained to a certain time, but was communicated to believers from the foundation of the world, as well as extended to the last ages of the world.

Several considerations will clear this.

(1.) The scripture speaks but of *one person* designed for this great work. John Baptist speaks of *the Lamb of God,* pointing to one Lamb appointed to *take away the sins of the world, John* 1. 29. The world is to be understood χρονικῶς, for all ages, all times of the world: as the same is meant; *He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world,* 1 *John* 2, 2; and *he,* and

* Zanch. tom. 7. part. 1. p. 296.

only he, is the propitiation *by once offering of himself:* not for the sins of us only that live in the dregs of time, and the declining age of the world, but of those that went before in all ages of the world from its youth, till his appearance in the flesh, and expiring upon the cross. Christ is said to be the one Mediator in the same sense that God is said to be the one God; *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,* 1 *Tim.* 2. 5. As there is but one Creator of man, so there is but one Mediator for men. As God is the God of all that died before Christ came, as well as of those that lived after; so Christ is the Mediator of all that died before his coming, as well as of those that saw his day. They had Christ for their Mediator, or some other; some other they could not have, because there is but one. They might as well have had another Creator besides God, as another Mediator besides the Man Christ Jesus.

In regard of the antiquity of his mediation, from the foundation of the world, he is represented, when he walks as Mediator in the midst of the *seven golden candlesticks,* with *hair as white as wool,* a character of age, *Rev.* 1. 14. As God is described so in regard of his eternity, *Dan.* 7. 9. There is but one God from eternity; but one Mediator, whose mediation hath the same date as the foundation of the world, and runs parallel with it. But one captain of salvation also for many sons, that were brought to glory, *Heb.* 2. 10. All that were brought to glory, were brought into that happy state by this captain of salvation, as made perfect by sufferings; so that either none were brought to glory before the sufferings of Christ, which is not true; or they were brought to glory by virtue of the sufferings of that captain of salvation. If that one captain were not a perfect head of salvation but by shedding his blood, then those that were under his conduct from the beginning of the world could not be perfect, but upon the account of his passion. For

they had no perfection, but in and by their head; the same way that he was justified for them, they were justified by him.

(2.) This one Mediator was set forth ever since the fall of man, as the *foundation of pardon and recovery.* The covenant of grace, commencing from the time of the fall of man, the virtue of this blood, which is the blood of the covenant, bore the same date; and indeed the blood of the Redeemer as the way of procuring restoration was signified in that first promise, which was the first dawning of the covenant of grace, after that black night of obscurity the revolt of man had drawn upon the world, *Gen.* 3. 15. The recovery of man from that gulf of misery, the head or subtle brains of the serpent had cast them into, is promised there to be by a man, (for that must be signified by the seed of the woman,) and some great and worthy person able for so great an undertaking; and to be effected by suffering, intimated by bruising his heel; which could not be without something of blood in the case; Satan would not cease, but express his enmity against the dissolver of his works, and the deliverer of his captives.

It must also signify a deliverance from that which he was reduced to by the subtlety of the serpent, and that was sin and destruction. It could not be meant of a freedom from a bodily death, because this promise being made before the pronouncing the sentence of a bodily death, which was not till ver. 19, was a bar to any such thought; for it had been a mockery, a falsity in God to promise Adam a redemption from that, and afterward overturn his promise, by threatening that which he had promised before to redeem him from. This bruise therefore that the seed of the woman was to receive from the devil, and what time soever it should be inflicted, was to extend in the virtue of it to Adam, and his believing posterity that should come upon, and go off the stage of the world, before the revolution of that time wherein it was to be

transacted; otherwise, the making of this promise to him, which should not distill any gracious dews upon him, had been to feed him with mere smoke, a thing unbecoming the Creator of the world; besides it was declared in types and figures.

As the ceremonial uncleanness which the legal sacrifices were appointed to purge, was an image of the moral impurity which needed expiation; so the blood of beasts, shed for the cleansing of it, was a shadow of that blood which was designed in the fulness of time for the expiation of the other. Nay, there were not only types of it, but plain prophecies concerning it. The righteousness whereby all believers are justified, is witnessed in the whole current of Scripture, both by the law and the prophets, to be without the works of the law; *Even that righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, Rom.* 3. 21, 22. And therefore when there was a conference between Moses and Elias on the one part, and Christ on the other, the subject of it is not any thing but that of his decease, *Luke* 9. 31. The declaration of that being the chief intent of the types of the law, instituted by the ministry of Moses, and of the prophets, whereof Elias was the chief, though not in the publishing of the Mediator, yet in the peculiar mark of the favour of God in his translation to heaven.

But Isaiah is the plainest and most illustrious in the proclamations of the coming, the design, and methods of the Redeemer: * and particularly the pardon of sin by virtue of his suffering is discovered; *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.* Then it follows, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my own sake, Isa.* 43. 24, 25. Christ is said *to serve with their sins;* and *Isa.* 53, is a comment upon this, showing what kind of servitude it was that the Redeemer endured, and what that weariness was.

* Gawer de Satisfact. p. 74, &c.

which he sustained for our iniquity, viz. that he was wounded, bruised, and offered up. The whole scope of the chapter proves this, for it is spent in numbering up the benefits by the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, and gathering a church from all parts of the world, ver. 5, 6, &c. and ver. 19, 20. And in the last part describes the chiefest benefit by the Messiah, viz. propitiation and remission of sin; and to show that pardon was wholly free, he removes all false causes of pardon, human merit, and legal sacrifices; *Thou hast not called upon me, thou hast not filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices*, ver. 22, 23; and then he publishes the merit of the Messiah, serving with, or in their sins, upon which account out of mere grace the sins of men are blotted out, ver. 24. 25; as much as to say, not thou, O Jacob, by thy duties and offerings hast merited the blotting out of thy sins: that glory is only due to me who served with thy sins in dying and suffering, and paid the price of redemption, that by this means, without thy merit, thy sins might be blotted out, and ver. 27, 28, he declares the rejection of the Jewish church, the giving *Jacob to a curse, and Israel to a reproach*, for their refusal of this way of redemption.

(3.) Though these promises and prophecies of the expiation and cleansing of sin, were something obscure to them, and though they did not exactly know the method now it would be accomplished, yet that sin should be pardoned, was fully revealed, and something of the method of it might be known unto them.

[1.] That sin should be pardoned, was *fully revealed* to them, and their faith had something clear for their support. It was sufficient that he had published a time wherein, and a seed whereby Satan's head should be bruised; and afterwards had proclaimed his name in text letters, to be *a God pardoning iniquities, transgressions, and sins, Exod.* 34. 6. How could Jacob without the knowledge of this, say at

his expiring hour, that he had *waited for God's salvation? Gen.* 49. 18. How could David else so earnestly have begged for a purging hyssop? How could he be confident that there was a grace to make him as white as the unspotted snow, and his bloody soul as pure as unstained wool? *Psa.* 51. 7. How could Manasseh have with so much confidence laid himself at the feet of God in his prison, had he looked upon him only as an avenging, and not a pitying God? The promise of God's being *their God*, was often inculcated to them, assuring them thereby that the thing should be done, that nothing of pardon, and the fruit of it, should be wanting to them, though the manner was not declared in that promise; for the promise of God's being their God, included all spiritual blessings; particularly this of cleansing from sin, without which he could not be their God in a way of grace, but their Judge in a way of wrath.

[2.] They might know something of *the method and manner of it*. The mercy of God was revealed, the pardon of sin assured, and sacrifices instituted among the Jews to keep up their faith in the expectation of this promised expiation: but the manner how, and the merit whereby, was not so clearly drawn out to their view, which is fully opened to us in the gospel, *Eph.* 3. 5. The types indeed were obscure, it is a hard matter to understand them now, since the revelation of the gospel; much harder to spell them out by that moon-light before the sun was risen. Yet the believers then could not be ignorant, but there was some excellent thing wrapped up in them; that they were not appointed for any excellency they had in themselves, or any power to propitiate God, and appease his anger; which God's disdainful speaking of them many times, when they rested upon their external sacrifices, might inform them of. They might collect from thence, that they all had reference to some richer blood, and were images of some nobler sacrifice; besides what the foundation promise would

mind them of, that some great person in our nature was designed for the bruising the serpent's head, by suffering the bruising of his heel by the force of the serpent. They could not read that glorious and comfortable name of God, *Exod.* 34. 6, but that clause, that he would *by no means clear the guilty*, ver. 7, (which belongs to his name, as well as the other of pardoning, and is uttered with the same breath,) might startle them, and would seem to be an acceptation to dash out the comfort of all the foregoing titles: how they could reconcile such distant terms of a God pardoning, and yet not clearing the guilty, without a reflection upon some grand expiatory sacrifice, which might render to justice what was due for their crimes, and draw forth from mercy what was necessary for their misery, I understand not.

No doubt but some of them saw something of the Messiah's work in the typical sacrifices and cere monies; for it is not likely that they should all be wholly ignorant of the intendment of them. It is very likely that Job, who was not a Jew, but an Edomite, and as some think, died that year the Israelites came out of Egypt, had the knowledge of redemption by the Messiah; and why might not the Israelites also have some knowledge of it as early? No question but they had; the place in Job is remarkable; *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, Job.* 19. 25. Most, both of protestants and papists, understand it of Christ. The word is גאל, a Redeemer by right of affinity, as Christ was, being our brother, by the assumption of our nature; and he seems to speak not only of one that was a Redeemer in act, but a Redeemer by office; and his appearance to be in the latter day, referreth to his incarnation in the latter age of the world; whom himself should also behold with his eyes at the resurrection.

It is some extraordinary and remarkable thing, that he would have so noted, for he speaks, *O that*

my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book, that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever, ver. 23, 24. He would have it perpetually preserved and marked; and the comfort he took in the consideration of this his Redeemer to be incarnate, so possesses him, that it is observed that he doth not utter such heavy complaints to the end of the book, as he had done before. Christ was as much Job's Redeemer before his incarnation and passion, as ours since: yet as to the manner how he was to redeem, the price he was to pay, there was a veil upon him, till it was cleared up by the prophets upon a nearer approach of the dawning of the fulness of time: for though they had some revelation of the Messiah as a great person, a great priest, after the order of Melchisedec, a great king, a special favourite of God; yet how he was to cleanse sin, they were ignorant of: as they did not know what new doctrines he would reveal as a prophet, or what kind of kingdom he should have as monarch, so they did not fully know what kind of sacrifice he should offer as a priest: they had some kind of knowledge, but not a distinct one.

(4.) The ancient patriarchs had faith, and *were actually pardoned.* They had the same spirit of faith as those had which lived in the times of the gospel, 2 *Cor.* 4. 13. Noah is said to be *a just man, and perfect in his generations, Gen.* 6. 9; * when he was young, and when he was old: but how? *He found grace in the eyes of the Lord,* ver. 8. He denied his own righteousness, and fled to the grace of God; which could not be exhibited to him but in Christ. For no grace without contented justice. The ground of all the comfort and joy Abraham had, was the sight of the appearance of this bleeding Redeemer, though afar off, *John* 8. 56. To what purpose was that sight without a benefit redounding to

* Coccei sum. Theolog.

him from it? And that great patriarch was justified by faith in him, which the apostle discourseth of, and hereupon he was called the *father of the faithful*, *Rom.* 4, as being the first express pattern of justification set down in scripture. * For he was not the Father of the faithful by carnal procreation, but upon the account of religion; the Father, as he was the teacher by his example, the name of fathers being given to instructors.

If he were not therefore cleansed, and counted righteous upon the account of this blood, he could not be set forth as a pattern of justification unto others, the pattern being wrote one way, and the copies another. It was the sole promise of the blessed seed, which was the cause of his justification, not sacrifices or circumcision. The same righteousness is imputed to the father, as is to the children; and the same to the children that was to the father. He, and we have the same faith, the same object of faith: and by what we are justified, by the same he was justified: it was the same blessedness he and we have, the same gospel he and we heard, *Gal.* 3. 8. The grace conferred upon David was from Christ, how could his sin else have been remitted, for which no sacrifice was appointed under the law? *Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it*, *Psal.* 51, 16, 17. Supposing the legal sacrifices were sufficient, without any relation to something else to expiate the sin for which they were appointed, how should those sins of presumption which David was guilty of, be expiated, since there was no institution of any legal victim for them? Surely the Israelites were not left destitute of help in this case. And God by providing no sacrifice for those sins, intimated that there was a nobler sacrifice yet behind.

The Messiah as a priest was in David's eye, whom he calls his Lord, though he was to proceed out of

* Illyric. Velam. Moses. p. 247.

his loins, *Psal.* 110. 1, 4. David's Lord by another right than as God; for he doth distinguish him from the Father as Lord, and therefore David's Lord by another right, a right of redemption. The Jews had a sufficient account that the sacrifices of the law could not purge sin, in the sacrifices of the *red heifer*, *Numb.* 19. 2, which could not expiate their sins. If it had a virtue to this purpose, why should the priest who sacrificed her, and sprinkled the blood before the tabernacle, and the person that burnt her, and the person that gathered up the ashes, wash their clothes afterwards, and be *unclean till the evening*, ver. 7, 8, 9, who were more likely than the rest to be expiated by it? Their sins were pardoned, but impossible to be so by the *blood of bulls and goats*, *Heb.* 10. 4; yet not without the interposition of a blood sacrifice; for *without blood, there is no remission*, *Heb.* 9. 22; whereby the apostle proves the necessity of the sacrifice of Christ: and could sin be pardoned without a sacrifice, the apostle's argument to evince the unpardonableness of the sin against the Holy Ghost, or of those that refused the sacrifice of Christ, would be invalid; for his reason to prove it unpardonable, is, because there is no more sacrifice for it.

All which supposes the necessity of a satisfaction to justice by blood, to open the way to the throne of grace, and put any man into the favour of God. It was this blood therefore shed upon the cross, whereby the transgressions under the first testament were purged: and upon the acconnt of which, the *promised inheritance* was received; *Heb.* 9. 15. Christ could not else have pronounced a blessedness upon faith without the vision of him: as he doth; *Blessed are they that have believed, and have not seen*, *John* 20. 19; meaning those that died in faith in the time of the law. And the apostle is express in it, that Christ by that *one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, *Heb.* 10. 14. Understanding those that were sanctified, or cleansed, or pardoned before the

actual offering, as appears by the ground of this his inference, which was the insufficiency of all other sacrifices to take away sin.

There was never but one God that justifies, never but one way of justification, and that by faith; as the apostle argues, *Rom.* 3. 30, and therefore but one cause of the justification of all them that went before, because but one object of faith, the blood of the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world: in him only *all things are gathered* and summed up into blessedness, *Eph.* 1. 12, and men are *blessed in him*, *Psal.* 72. 17. In his merit saith the Chaldee paraphrase, understanding it of the Messiah.

(5.) And this might well be upon the account of the *compact between the Father the Judge, and the Son the Redeemer*. Had he not promised the shedding of his blood, justice had dislodged the sinner from the world. All hopes of regaining paradise had been lost, without it the authority of the law had not been preserved, the sacredness of divine truth had been violated, and the rectitude of his government laid in the dust by an easy indulgence, and passing over the sin. Christ therefore stood up, and promised his soul as a sacrifice for sin. He was before Abraham was. *Before Abraham was, I am*; *I am, John* 8. 58, I was what I am now, a Mediator; by promise, by constitution, by acceptation; and therefore Abraham saw my day, and was glad, as it is before, ver. 56. I was a lamb slain, accepted as a lamb slain, as Mediator upon credit. His office was of a more ancient date than his incarnation.

And he was the same in the function of a Mediator before, as he was after his taking our flesh; the same for them in his compact as he was for us in the performance. A man may be freed from prison, upon the promise of a surety worthy of credit, though the debt be not actually paid till some time after, according to agreement; and the possession of a purchase may be delivered, though a time afterwards be set for

the payment of the price. The payment of the ransom is not of absolute necessity before the deliverance of the captive. Many were delivered from their bonds by God, before the payment made by Christ, but not before the payment promised by him. The blood of this sacrifice as shed, reaches us, though sixteen hundred years since it was poured out; but the blood of this sacrifice promised by the Redeemer, and receiving credit with God, reached Adam four thousand years before it was shed. God imparted the virtue before Christ actually merited, and freed the captive before the ransom was paid; yet upon the account of the promised merit, and contracted ransom, natural causes must be before the effect; moral causes may be after the effect.

The blood of Christ cleanseth, not as a natural, but as a moral cause. He was in this respect a *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, *Rev.* 13. 8, slain fœderally, though not actually; imputatively, though not really; sententially in the acceptation of the Judge, though not executively in the enduring the passion; and therefore he was a lamb slain from the foundation of the world efficaciously; by whose blood the ancient believers were sprinkled, as well as those of a later date: and though some refer those words *from the foundation of the world* not to the word slain, but to the writing of the names in the book of life of the lamb, whose names were written from the foundation of the world in the book of the Lamb slain, it will not much alter the thing. The slaying of the Lamb was agreed, as well as the writing the names in the book: and it will also follow, that no man had any place in the book, but had also an interest in the Lamb slain, and the benefits he enjoyed by virtue of the register were to flow to him through the blood of the covenanting Redeemer, and their names were writ there upon the credit of the lamb to be slain; for *in him was the choice made before the foundation of the world*, *Eph.* 1. 4, and through him were

the blessings of pardon given out from the foundation of the world.

Had not this Lamb offered himself to be slain, man had been cast into everlasting chains as well as the devils, who had no Mediator, no Lamb to be slain for them. Well then, it follows from hence, that the blood of Christ is of a full credit with God. Christ was the same to the patriarchs, as to the apostles; *He was the same yesterday, to day, and for ever: yesterday,* to Adam four thousand years since, *Heb.* 13. 8. Yesterday in the Hebrew phrase often signifies all the time past. To day, now in the time of his appearance. For ever, to the generations that follow; not only in regard of his person and deity, but in regard of his office and benefits: it is not meant of his Deity, but of his Mediation, as will appear by the following verse, where the apostle designs the alienating their judgments from too high an opinion of the ceremonial rites and sacrifices. They never purged sin, but Christ was the cause of the purgation of them under the law, as well as under the gospel, though he were not so distinctly known by them, as by us.

The blood of Christ extended to believers in all ages: he was a seed for Abraham, as well as Abraham's seed, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called,* זרע לך. *Gen.* 21. 12; *A seed for thee,* it may be rendered, a seed for thy good and eternal deliverance: not only a seed out of his loins, but a seed for his benefit. As a flash of lightning out of a cloud in the night enlightens all things both before and behind it, so the righteousness and blood of Christ is imputed not only to men that come after him, but to those that went before him. If the credit of it were so great then, the merit of it is as great now, since the actual effusion of the blood. It is therefore rightly a blood that cleanseth from all sin.

2. This was the *true and sole end* of his incarnation and death. All the ends mentioned by the angel

Gabriel to Daniel, centre in this and refer to it; *To finish the transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, Dan.* 9. 24; and thereby should all the visions and prophecies concerning the Messiah and his work be fulfilled. And to this purpose would *the most holy* be anointed as the cause and foundation of all that removal of sin mentioned before. All the words which signify sin, and contain in them all sorts of sin, are here expressed, to show the completeness of the design in regard of the subject the Messiah was to remove out of the way.

The word translated to *finish*, כלא signifies also to *shut up*, or *restrain*. The word translated to *make an end*, חתם signifies to *seal up*, sin was to be restrained from ravaging about at pleasure like a devouring monster, or shut up and stopped from being an accuser to condemnation; and sealed up, not for confirmation of sin, but for concealment of it, as things sealed are not to be looked into but by persons authorised thereunto: it is a breach of trust, and an invasion of another's right to do it. So God is said to cover sin, and Christ here to seal up sin by his blood, and for ever hide it from the face of God, and to make reconciliation for iniquity or expiate it. Since it was sin only that was the cause of the enmity, and which separated us from communion with God, wherein the happiness of a creature is placed, there was a necessity, for our rescue from misery, to remove our guilt, that that which tore us might be muzzled; that that which accused us might be silenced; that that which was a bar to our happiness might be demolished, that so the misery we endured might fly from us, and the blessings we wanted might flow down to us.

For this cause the Messiah was anointed, and for this end he undertook his employment on earth, to remove the obstacle which hindered our access to God. Hence we find that the *covenant of grace*,

when spoken of in the old testament to be fully revealed in the latter days, contains chiefly those promises of *blotting out transgressions, and remembering sin no more.*

(1.) This is the *fundamental* doctrine of the gospel. The apostle therefore with a particular emphasis, tells them this is a thing to be known and acknowledged by all that own christianity; *And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins,* 1 *John* 3. 5. You know nothing of christianity, if you know not and believe not this, that Christ appeared to take away the guilt of sin by a non-imputation, and to quell the power of sin by a mortification of it; to remove the punishment it had merited, and the corruption it had established in the hearts of men. Sin therefore will perfectly be cleansed both by remission and sanctification, else Christ would fall short of the end of his manifestation.

This was the doctrine the apostles were first charged to publish, both as the reason of Christ's suffering and of his resurrection, that *remission of sins* might be preached in his name among all nations, *Luke* 24. 46, 47. Remission of sin as purchased by his death, and assured by his resurrection. The foundation of pardon was in his passion, and the manifestation of the efficacy of his passion was by his resurrection. Both of them therefore were to be declared in order to this end. And though Paul was not then present at this first commission, (as being one born out of due time, and summoned into the office of apostleship afterward) yet his instructions were of the same nature, and observed by him in the same order; *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,* viz first, *How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,* 1 *Cor.* 15. 3.

Set aside this end, and what attractive can there be in a crucified man, one made the derision and reproach of his nation, to cause any to believe in him? Faith particularly pitches upon the death of Christ,

and particularly eyes in that passion the intent both of the sender and of him that is sent. The first thing himself published when he exercised his office, was this jubilee; *The acceptable year of the Lord, Luke* 4. 18, 19, wherein captives were to be delivered, debts to be remitted, and bonds to be cancelled. That was the main end of his coming to die, which when done was the sole reason of his advancement: the purging sin, and our sin, was the ground of his glorious *sitting at the right hand of God, Heb.* 1. 3.

(2.) There could be *no other end* of his shedding his blood, but this. Since his death is called a sacrifice, *Eph.* 5. 2. A propitiation, 1 *John* 2. 2. *Rom.* 3. 25, it can be for no other end but the cleansing of sin. For this was the reason of the insitution of sacrifices. Blood shed in a sacrifice-way implied blood criminal, and deserving to be shed. Had he come upon the earth in a stately grandeur to rout armies of men, batter down the walls of cities, and demolish empires; the rooting out of tyranny and monsters might have been thought his design. But this was no way for the expiation of sin, but the destruction of the sinner. But coming to shed his blood, to be a sacrifice, to be the reproach of men, and to be God's servant in this office, which he was not by nature, what end can be imagined, but somewhat in relation to sin, and that both to the expiation and destruction of it? For dying and shedding his blood for it was not the way to maintain sin, but to abolish it; not a means to render iniquity lovely, but odious. If this were not the issue of his death, it would be useless, his blood would be shed in vain.

His death being a punishment, and by way of sacrifice, must be for some end: it could not be for any thing relating to himself, or to merit any thing for himself; for being God, there could be no accession of happiness to him, he needed not to merit any

thing, because he wanted nothing. All merit is a desert of something which is not at present possessed, but desired to be possessed. He had not, nor could commit any sin for which he should become a sacrifice. The Deity is incapable of unrighteousness and crime. The punishment was not therefore upon any account of his own. No crime was committed by him in his humanity that might merit the infliction of such a punishment; this was impossible, for whatsoever crime had been committed in his humanity, had been the crime of his person, and so had been a spot upon his Deity, united in one person with his humanity.

Besides, he took human nature to suffer in it: his incarnation had an *ought to suffer* linked to it, so that his shedding his blood was resolved on before any crime could be committed, if it were to be supposed that in his humanity he were capable of any error or miscarriage. His blood must be shed for some other, and the punishment inflicted upon him, which was merited by some other persons: it could not be for the holy angels, they were innocent, and not criminally indebted, and therefore obnoxious to no penalty. It being for the taking away of sin, the word sin excludes the good angels who never sinned, but always obeyed God: *Psa.* 103. 21. Nor could it be for evil angels, for the scripture excludes them from any redemption, and binds them for ever in chains of darkness to bear the punishment in their own persons. Besides that, this punishment could not properly be borne in any other nature specifically distinct from their sinning nature, as it was. It must be for the sin of men, or for nothing: and consequently the death of Christ would be an insignificant thing; but is utterly inconsistent with the wisdom and holiness of God to appoint, and the wisdom and honour of Christ to agree to a task for nothing, and to no purpose.

* Now since Christ offered his life to God (which he did not owe upon his own account) a reward was due to him upon the account of justice, which must consist in remitting something which he owed, or imparting something which he wanted; no debt for himself could he be charged with, no indigency could be in his humanity upon his own account, since all happiness was due to that, by virtue of its union with the Deity; nothing could be bestowed upon him for himself, because he wanted nothing, nothing could be remitted to him, because he owed nothing. Since therefore he so deeply humbled himself, not for himself, but for others upon his account, that what they owed might be remitted, and what they wanted, might be bestowed. These could be no other than men, whom he came to justify, and to whom the debt owing to God might be discounted upon the account of Christ's payment.

3. This cleansing sin is wrought solely *by his own worth*, as he is the Son of God. It is therefore said in the text, the blood, not only of Jesus Christ, but of the Son of God. The blood of Jesus received its value from his Sonship, the eternal relation he stood in to his Father. Since sin is an infinite evil, as being committed against an infinite God, no mere creature can satisfy for it, nor can all the holy works of all the creatures be a compensation for one act of sin, because the vastest heap of all the holy actions of men and angels would never amount to an infinite goodness, which is necessary for the satisfaction of an infinite wrong. One sin † containing in it an infinite malice, is greater in the rank of evils, than all good works heaped together can be in the rank of goods. But this blood was not only the blood of Jesus, a man, but the blood of that person that was the Son of God; of him who was our surety as the Son of God, before he was our surety as the Son of man; who interposed

* Sabund. Tit. 260. † Saith Lessius.

as a surety four thousand years before his incarnation and shedding his blood, though he could not act the part of a surety without his incarnation and shedding his blood. Either we had no surety before he was incarnate, or else the Son of God in his own person was our surety. The shedding his blood was pursuant to that interposition he made as the Son of God in our stead, before he was the Son of man; and it was truly the blood of that person who had offered himself to be our surety, and been accepted in that relation so many ages before a created nature was assumed by him; so that though his humanity was a creature, and was necessary as a subject wherein the satisfaction was to be performed, yet it added no worth to the satisfaction of itself.

The value which his blood had, was from his Deity, his being the Son of God, in which condition he entered into his relation of a Mediator for us. It was the same person that was the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person, the same person that upheld all things by the word of his power, who did by himself, in that glorious person, *purge our sins*, *Heb.* 1. 3. The priests under the law purged the sins of the people by the sacrifices of beasts, this was an infinitely nobler victim, a beam of brightness streaming from the eternal Father while he was purging our sins in his eclipse; the express image of his person, while he was made a curse upon the cross, upholding all things by the word of his power, while he bowed his head under the weight of his sufferings; he was all this while making an atonement for our sins, whence redounded an inconceivable efficacy to his blood. The nature of man died, but he had another nature as immortal as the person whose brightness he was, that lived to add value to his sufferings.

This divine person by his own strength, and in this glorious relation, wrestled with the flames of wrath, and took hold of the tribunal of justice, and by the value of his sufferings, smoothed the face of a frown-

ing God, assuaged the tempests of a provoked justice, and placed before the tribunal of judgment a strong and everlasting righteousness of his own composure, as a veil between the piercing eye of divine holiness, and the guilty and filthy state of a sinner; so great a person, one equal with God, was necessary for the restoring his honour, and sanctifying his name; so great a person was necessary for the purging the fallen creature from his guilt and filth.

4. Hence it follows that sin is *perfectly* cleansed by this blood. Since it expiated the sins of former ages, since it was the end of his coming, since he did what he did by his own worth, sin must be perfectly cleansed, else the end of his coming is not attained, and his worth would appear to be but of a finite value. All cleansing is the fruit of this blood, the cleansing from guilt is wrought immediately by it, the purging from filth is mediately by his Spirit, but as it was the purchase of his blood.

(1.) The blood of Christ doth not perfectly cleanse us here from sin, in regard *of the sense of it*. Some sparks of the fiery law will sometimes flash in our consciences, and the peace of the gospel be put under a veil. The smiles of God's countenance seem to be changed into frowns, and the blood of Christ appears, as if it ran low. Evidences may be blurred, and guilt revived. Satan may accuse, and conscience knows not how to answer him. The sore may run fresh in the night, and the soul have not only comfort hid from it, but refuse comfort when it stands at the door. There will be startlings of unbelief, distrusts of God, and misty steams from the miry lake of nature. But it hath laid a perfect foundation, and the top stone of a full sense and comfort will be laid at last. Peace shall be as an illustrious sunshine without a cloud, a triumphant breaking out of love, without any arrows of wrath sticking fast in the conscience; a sweet calm without any whisper of a blustering tempest; the guilt of sin shall be for ever wiped out of the conscience,

as well as blotted out of God's book. The accuser shall no more accuse us, either to God or ourselves; no new indictment shall be formed by him at the bar of conscience; nay conscience itself shall be for ever purged, and sing an uninterrupted requiem and hymn of peace, shall not hiss the least accusation of a crime. As God's justice shall read nothing for condemnation; so conscience shall read nothing for accusation.

The blood of Christ will be perfect in the effects of it. As it rent the veil between God and us, it will rend the veil between conscience and us; no more frowns from the one, nor any more janglings in the other. As Christ said, when he was giving up the ghost, *it is finished*, viz. the sense and sufferings under a guilty state, it is then a believer may say his fears are finished, when he is breathing forth his soul into the arms of a sacrificed Saviour. Iniquities shall never more appear in their guilty charge to draw blood from the soul of a penitent believer. The soul shall be without fault before the throne of God, *Rev.* 14. 5.

(2.) The blood of Christ doth not perfectly cleanse us here from sin, in regard of the *stirrings* of it. The old serpent will be sometimes stinging us, and sometimes foiling us. The righteous soul will be vexed with corruptions within it, as well as the abominations of others without it. The Canaanite is in the land; and therefore the virtue of the blood of Christ is expressed in our power of wrestling, not yet in the glory of a triumph. It doth not here perfectly free us from the remainders of sin, that we may be still sensible that we are fallen creatures, and have every day fresh notices, and experiments of its powerful virtue; and that his love might meet with daily valuations in a daily sense of our misery. But this blood shall perfect what it hath begun, and the troubled sea of corruption that sends forth mire and dirt, shall be totally removed, then shall the soul be as pure as unstained wool; as spotless as the dew from the womb of the morning, no wrinkles upon the face, no bubblings up of

corruption in the soul; the blood of Christ shall still the waves, and expel the filth, and crown the soul with an everlasting victory. The spirits of just men are then made perfect, *Heb.* 12. 23.

(3.) But the blood of Christ perfectly cleanseth us from sin here, in regard of *condemnation and punishment*. Thus it blots it out of the book of God's justice; it is no more to be remembered in a way of legal and judicial sentence against the sinner. Though the nature of sin doth not cease to be sinful, yet the power of sin ceaseth to be condemning. The sentence of the law is revoked, the right to condemn is removed, and sin is not *imputed to them*, 1 *Cor.* 5. 19. Where the crime is not imputed, the punishment ought not to be inflicted, it is inconsistent with the righteousness of God to be an appeased, and yet a revenging judge. When the cause of his anger is removed, the effects of his anger are extinguished, where there is a cleansing from the guilt, there necessarily follows a removal of the punishment. *What is the debt we owe upon sin? Is it not the debt of punishment, which is righteously exacted for the fault committed?

When the blood of Christ therefore purifies any from their guilt, it rescues them from the punishment due to that guilt. Herein doth the pardon of sin properly consist, in a *remission of punishment*. The crime cannot be remitted, but only in regard of punishment merited by it. If God should punish a man that is sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and pleaded for by the blood of Christ, it would be contrary both to his justice and mercy: To his justice, because he hath accepted of the satisfaction made by Christ, who paid the debt, and acquitted the criminal, when he bore his sin in his own body upon the tree: it would be contrary to his mercy, for it would be cruelty to adjudge a person to punishment, who is legally discharged, and put into the state of an inno-

* Turretin. de satisfact. p. 380.

cent person, by the imputation of the righteousness of the Redeemer. Though the acts of sin are formally the same that they were, yet the state of a cleansed sinner is not legally the same that it was; for being free from the charge of the law, he is no longer obnoxious to the severity of the law. *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, Rom.* 8. 1. No matter left, that shall actually condemn, since Christ for sin, or as a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, ver. 3.

(4.) The effect of this blood shall appear perfect at the last in *the final sentence.* It cleanseth us initially here, completely hereafter. It cleanseth us here in law. Its virtue shall be manifested by a final sentence. *He that believes not, is condemned already, John* 3. 18. Condemned by the threatenings, but not by the pronounced sentence. So he that believes is justified by the plea of this blood, justified in the promise of the gospel, but not yet by public sentence, which is reserved till the last day. *After death the judgment, Heb.* 9. 27. As Christ was justified after he had presented his blood, was owned to be God's righteous servant, by a public declaration in his *exaltation,* 1 *Tim.* 2. 16; so those that have an interest in this blood, have a sentential justification at their dissolution, by God as a judge; and fully complete, when their persons shall be pronounced just, at the reunion of the soul and body at the resurrection: whence this time is called the day *of refreshment, Acts* 3. 19, when sins shall be blotted out, * when God shall no more correct, and conscience shall no more reproach for guilt.

Sin is cleansed now, but said to be blotted out then, because then all the parts of salvation shall be complete. Election was an act of eternity, but then it shall be declared in the separation of them for ever from the rest of the world, to be with him in glory.

* Faucheur in loc. vol. 2. p. 163, &c.

Redemption was purchased by the death of Christ, offered in the gospel, and conferred upon the believer, but then it will be complete in a deliverance from all enemies, and the last enemy, death; and therefore called the *day of redemption, Eph.* 4. 30. There shall then be an endless repose from all sorrow within, and trouble without. Sanctification is begun to be wrought here by the Spirit, but sin is not abolished; all earthly affections are not completely put off. So it will be with our justification, as it consists in pardon of sin; sins are blotted out now, but then in a more excellent, full, and visible manner. We need a daily pardon upon a daily sin, but then God will absolve us once for all, from all our faults committed in our whole lives, and no more will be committed to need a pardon.

There is here a secret grant passed in our consciences; there a solemn publication of it before men and angels. Here every one receives a pardon in particular, as they come to him; as those under the law had a particular expiation by the means of the sacrifices presented by them, but in the annual day of expiation there was a general propitiation for the sins of the people, and all their iniquities together were carried into the desert. So the pardon that was granted to particular believers shall then resolve into one entire absolution of the whole body: when Christ shall pronounce them all righteous, and present them unblameable, and without spot to his Father. Justification is complete in this world, in regard that the guilt of sin shall never return, and a person counted righteous shall never be counted unrighteous; but not so complete that the sense of sin shall never return. But then neither David's murder shall rise up against him, nor Peter's denial of his Master ever stare him in the face; no need of fresh looks upon the brazen serpent for cure, because there shall be no bitings by the fiery ones to grieve and trouble.

(5.) Hence, it cleanseth from all sin *universally*

For since it was the blood of so great a person as the Son of God, it is as powerful to cleanse us from the greatest as the least. Had it been the blood of a sinful creature, it had been so far from expiation, that it would rather have been for pollution. Had it been the blood of an angel, though holy, (supposing they had any to shed) yet it had been the blood of a creature, and therefore incapable of mounting to an infinite value. But since it is the blood of the Son of God, it is both the blood of a holy and of an uncreated, and infinite person. Is it not therefore able to exceed all the bulk of finite sins, and to equal in dignity the infiniteness of the injury in every transaction? The particle all is but a rational consequent upon the mention of so rich a treasure of blood. The nature of the sins, and the blackness of them, is not regarded, when this blood is set in opposition to them. God only looks what the sinners are, whether they repent and believe. He was *delivered for our offences, Rom.* 4. 25, not for some few offences, but for all; and as he was delivered for them, so he is accepted for them.

The effect therefore of it is a cleansing of all, both the original and additional transgressions; the omissions of that good, God hath righteously commanded, and the commissions of that evil he hath holily prohibited. Men have different sins, according to their various dispositions or constitutions. Every man hath his *own way.* And the iniquity of all those various sins of a different stamp, and contrary nature, in regard of the acts and objects, God hath made to meet at the cross of Christ, and laid them *all upon him, Isa.* 53. 6. The sins of all believing persons, in all parts in all ages, of the world, from the first moment of man sinning to the last sin committed on the earth.

In regard of this extensive virtue, the scape-goat was a type of him; for though there were particular sacrifices under the law, appointed for some sins, yet in that anniversary one, all the sins of the

people were laid upon the head of that devoted goat, to be carried into the wilderness, *Lev.* 16. 21. עיונותחטא תם בשעיחם And the same several words signifying all sorts of sins are there used, as God uses, when he proclaims himself a God forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, *Exod.* 34. 7. And the first we read of, cleansed by this blood, after it was shed, was the most prodigious wickedness that ever was committed in the face of the sun, even the *murder of the Son of God*, *Acts* 2. 36, 38. So that suppose a man were able to pull heaven and earth to pieces, murder all the rest of mankind, destroy the angels, those superlative parts of the creation; he would not contract so monstrous a guilt, as those did in the crucifying the Son of God, whose person was infinitely superior to the whole creation. God then hereby gave an experiment of the inestimable value of Christ's blood, and the inexhaustible virtue of it. Well might the apostle say, *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.*

PART II.

HOW THE BLOOD OF CHRIST CLEANSETH FROM SIN.

Christ took our sin upon himself—His sufferings imputed to us—By virtue of union and communion with him—This union and communion is by faith—Miserable state of unbelievers—No hope from mere mercy—The merit of saints, and purgatory exploded—No creature—No righteousness of our own can cleanse us from sin—No righteousness of ours perfect—One sinful act among a multitude of good works renders us incapable of justification by them—There is matter of condemnation in all our works—Falls short of the perfection required—Conscience bears testimony to this—All matter of glorying in ourselves excluded—The doctrine of justification by the blood of Christ a source of confidence—We should have recourse to it on all occasions.

HOW Christ's blood cleanseth from sin. God the Father doth actually and efficiently justify; Christ's blood doth meritoriously justify. God the Father is considered as judge, Christ is considered as priest and sacrifice. He was a *priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, Heb.* 2. 17. He is the *fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness, Zech.* 13. 1: and *forgive-*

ness of sin is a fruit of *redemption, through his blood*, *Col.* 1. 14.

This is done,

1. By taking sin *upon himself*. God collected all the sins from all parts of the world, in all ages of the world, bound them up together, *laid them upon* Christ's shoulders, *Isa.* 53. 6. Alluding to the manner of transferring the sins of the people, by Aaron's laying his hands upon the head of the sacrifice: so that as the scape-goat purged the people, Christ cleanseth or justifies men by *bearing their iniquities*, *Isa.* 53. 11. Not by bearing the pollution of them inherently, but the guilt of them, or the curse which the sinner had merited; for our sins could no more be transmitted to him in their impurity, than the iniquities of the Israelites could be infused into the scape-goat, but only in their curse and guilt. A beast was not capable of spiritual pollution, because it wanted an intellectual nature; nor Christ, because of the excellency of his person.

Christ took our sins upon him, not thereby to become sinful, but to become devoted in a judicial manner, *as a curse;* and therefore his being said to be made sin in one place, that we might be *made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 21, is to be interpreted by *Gal.* 3. 13, wherein he is said to be *made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law*, i. e. a person exposed to the vengeance of God, to procure impunity for the offenders, that they might be absolved, and treated as if they had never been criminal. *He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*, *John* 1. 29, αἴρων, the word signifies to take up, as well as to take away. He took the guilt upon his shoulders, that he might for ever take it away from ours.

*As we are made righteousness in him, so he was made sin for us: Now we are not righteous before

* Turretin de Satisfact. p. 118, much changed.

God, by an inherent, but by an imputed righteousness, nor was Christ made sin by inherent, but imputed guilt. The same way that his righteousness is communicated to us; our sin was communicated to him. Righteousness was inherent in him, but imputed to us; sin was inherent in us, but imputed to him; he received our evils to bestow his good; and submitted to our curse to impart to us his blessings; sustained the extremity of that wrath we had deserved, to confer upon us the grace he had purchased. The sin in us, which he was free from, was by divine estimation transferred upon him, as if he were guilty; that the righteousness he hath, which we were destitute of, might be transferred upon us, as if we were innocent. He was made sin, as if he had sinned all the sins of men, and we are made righteousness, as if we had not sinned at all.

2. By accounting the righteousness and sufficiency of his sufferings *to us*. If we stand upon our own foundation, we are lost; our own righteousness cannot cover us, nor our own imperfections relieve us. The *whole world lies in wickedness*, 1 *John* 5. 19. God is a consuming fire, and we are combustible matter; the holiness of God, and the soul of the most righteous fallen creature, cannot meet without abhorrency on the part of God, and terror on the part of man. Divine holiness cannot but hate us, divine justice cannot but consume us, if we have no other righteousness than our own imperfect one to please the one, and be a bar to the other. There is no justification by the law, but upon a perfect righteousness, and we must be justified by the performance of the law, or we can never be justified; for the law of God was not abrogated upon the fall of man; it is the authority of the law-giver, and not the offence of the malefactor, which doth abolish a law.

But we cannot perform the law ourselves. Alas, *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God Rom.* 3. 23, of that righteousness which glorifies

God; and having once broken the law, we can never be said perfectly to keep it; for if we had grace given us to perform it for the future, it nulls not the breach of it for the time past. Since the law is not abrogated, it must be exactly obeyed, the honour of it must be preserved; it cannot be observed by us, it was Christ only who kept it, and never broke it, and endured the penalty of it for us, not for himself: for the law requires obedience of a creature, but demands not punishment but upon default of obedience. The punishment was not inflicted on him for himself, but for us; the virtue of that must be transferred to us, which cannot be any other way than by imputation, or reckoning it ours, as we are one body with him. Besides, justification cannot be by any thing inherent in us; for we are ungodly, before the first instant of justification, *Rom. 5. 5*, and sinners, and enemies, *Rom. 5.* 10.

Since there is nothing but unrighteousness in us, a righteousness must be derived from something without us; if it be without us, it is not inherent in us. What righteousness is in us after justification, cannot be the cause of the justification which preceded that righteousness. The effect never precedes the cause. If the righteousness whereby we are justified be not inherent in us, but in another, how can it be our righteousness, but by some way of counting it to us? God intended Christ's suffering as the way of bearing iniquity for us, and accepted him as one that bore our iniquities, and made this bearing iniquity the ground of the *justification of many; By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities, Isa. 53.* 11. In his bearing our iniquities, there was the imputation of our sins: in our justification there must be the imputation of his suffering. The counting another's righteousness to us is as reasonable and easy to conceive, as the counting our sins to another.

Without this way of reckoning it to us, we cannot

conceive of the intercession of Christ, or what pleas he can use. He is an advocate by virtue of his propitiation, and his righteousness in it, 1 *John* 2. 1, 2. The plea then must be of this nature: Father, I took flesh by thy order, and suffered death according to thy pleasure: I gave my soul a ransom for many, and the shedding of my blood was a sweet smelling sacrifice. Thou wouldest have me be made a curse to free others from the curse, and to receive wounds, that others might receive health: let those therefore that plead the merit of my suffering, be absolved from their guilt. I have borne their sins, their iniquities thou didst cause to meet on me, condemn them not to bear those iniquities I have borne already. To what purpose did I bear them, if they must bear them too? And to what purpose should they believe in me, if they must sink under the same condemnation with those that refuse me? How this plea can be made without accepting those sufferings for us, and counting the righteousness of them to us, is not to be understood.

Some compare this way of imputation to the sun shining upon the wall, through a green or blue glass, whereby the true colour of the wall is indiscernable while the colour communicated by the glass is upon it; yet this colour is not the colour of the wall, but the colour of the glass, and inherent in the glass, only reflected upon the wall; so the righteousness whereby we are justified, and which covers our iniquities from the sight of God, is inherent in Christ, but transferred to us. The ground of this imputation is community of nature. Because he *took not the nature of angels*, it is not reckoned to them, *Heb.* 2. 16, 17. If he had taken the nature of angels, it could not have been reckoned to us, because he had not been akin to us. Had he taken the nature of angels, it could no more have been imputed to us, than the fall of angels can be imputed to us; which cannot be, because we have

not an agreement in the same nature with them: and next to that, the ground of it his resurrection from the grave. Had he laid in the grave, his righteousness could not have been imputed to us, because it had not been declared sufficient in itself; and the sufficiency of the price, and the accepting it for a ransom, must precede the accounting of it to another for his deliverance. That which is the evidence of the perfection, and agreeableness of it to the judgment of God, is the ground of the imputation of it to us: but his going to the Father, whereof his resurrection was the first step, and his ascension the next, is the convincing argument the comforter makes use of to persuade men of the fulness and exactness of it, *John* 16. 10.

(1.) This cleansing of us by imputing this blood to us, is *by virtue of union and communion with him.* The apostle before the text speaks of a fellowship with God and Christ, which implies union with Christ, and then the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. What Christ did as a common person, is accepted for us; but the actual imputation of it to us depends upon our becoming one body with him. If we had not had a union with Adam in nature, and been seminally in him, his sin could no more have been imputed to us than the sin of the fallen angels could be counted ours; so if we have not a union with Christ, his righteousness can no more be reckoned to us than the righteousness of the standing angels can be imputed to us. We must therefore be in Christ as really as we were in Adam, though not in the same manner of reality. We were in Adam seminally, we are in Christ legally; yet so, that it is counted in the judgment of God as much as if there were a seminal union. Believers are therefore called the seed of Christ, *Isa.* 53. 10. *Psal.* 22. 30. And they are called Christ, 1 *Cor.* 12. 12, and *the body of Christ*, ver. 27. It is, saith one, * not numerically, but legally such. If

* Mr. Herle in his Treatise of Christian Wisdom.

we had been in him seminally as we were in Adam, righteousness would have been communicated to all descending from him.

But God hath appointed a higher way of communication by spiritual union. As those who were in Adam by natural propagation, are made guilty by his transgression to condemnation; so all that are spiritually united to Christ, are cleansed from their *many offences* to justification, *Rom.* 5. 16. As there was a necessity of his union with us in our nature for our redemption, (since he could not be the Redeemer of mankind by death as he was the Son of God, unless he were also the son of man;) so there is a necessity of our union with him in his Spirit. As there could be no expiation without a satisfaction, no satisfaction to be made by Christ, unless there were an imputation of our sins to him, and no imputation can be supposed, unless he were united to us in our nature; so there can be no imputation of any thing in him to us, unless there be a strait union, whereby he becomes our head, and we his members. What does the apostle mean in that wish of being *found in Christ*, but this union, whereby he might have a share in his righteousness? *Phil.* 3. 9. Not his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God communicated through or by faith.

And where is our *completeness* but *in him*, *Colos.* 2. 10; as we are reckoned one mass with him, and being joined to him, are counted *one spirit* with him? 1 *Cor.* 6. 17. Union with him goes first in order of nature before justification; we are first united to him as our sponsor, and being in him, we are counted righteous. This is the apostle's assertion; *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, &c.* 1 *Cor.* 1 30. And so *the righteousness of the law*, *Rom.* 8. 4, * δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου, or the just judgment of the law *is fulfilled in us* (saith

* De Fæd. 442.

Cocceius.) We are judged to have in him a perfect obedience, or we are judged not out of Christ as sinners, but in Christ as his members.

(2.) This union is made by *faith;* and upon this account we are said to be *justified by faith.* This is our willingness to receive Christ upon the terms he is offered. Since a mediator is not a mediator of one, but supposeth in the notion of it two parties, there must be a consent on both sides. God's consent is manifested by giving, our consent is by receiving; which is a title given to faith, *John* 1. 12. God's consent in appointing and accepting the atonement, and ours in receiving the atonement, which is all one with *receiving forgiveness of sin, Rom.* 5. 11. God's consent in the typical administration was evident in appointing sacrifices, and the sending down fire from heaven for consuming them: the sinner's consent was to be signified by laying his hands upon the head of the sacrifice, intimating his union with that sacrifice, and so by the sacrificing of it, he was counted as quitted of that guilt for which the sacrifice was offered. We must be as willing to accept of this sacrifice, as Christ was to offer this sacrifice, with a willingness of the same kind; but alas, what creature can mount to a willingness of the same degree? God might have required many sharp conditions of us, many years troubles and sorrows; but he requires only a willingness of us to receive and acknowledge the depths of his wisdom and grace, and conform to his will in the new covenant. This makes union between the sinner and the Redeemer. By this the soul empties itself, and clasps about a Saviour; and then Christ and the believer are counted as one person legally: therefore Christ dwelling in us, and our having faith, are linked together as if they were the same thing, *Eph.* 3. 17.

By God's acceptance of this blood we are rendered cleansable and justifiable. By our acceptance of it, it is actually imputed to us, and we actually justified.

However, when it was shed by Christ, and received as a sweet smelling sacrifice by God, it made us pardonable, yet actual pardon is not bestowed without believing. His blood avails none but those that he pleads it for, and he pleads it not for those that come to God, but that *come to God by him, Heb.* 7. 25; those that plead in his name for the benefits which are the purchase of his blood; without him we are combustible matter before a consuming fire, and cannot approach to the throne of God with any success. This faith must go in order before cleansing or justification.

The righteousness of God is only upon them that believe; *We have believed that we might be justified, Rom.* 3. 22, and *Gal.* 2. 16. This faith is not our righteousness, nor is it ever called so, but we have a righteousness by the means of faith. By faith, or through faith is the language of the apostle; *Faith in his blood, Rom.* 3. 22, 25, faith applying to his blood, receiving it, and pleading it. Though faith is the eye and hand of the soul, looking up and reaching out to whole Christ as offered in the promise, yet in this act of it to be freed from the guilt of sin, it grasps Christ as a sacrifice, it hangs upon him as paying a price, and takes this blood as a blood shed for the soul, and insists upon the sufficient value of it with God. Faith respects the subject wherein it is, as guilty; for it is a grace, divesting a man of his own righteousness, and emptying a man of his own strength and sufficiency, and accusing the soul of guilt; and therefore eyes that which stands in direct opposition to this guilt, the free grace of God accepting Christ as a propitiation. It eyes that in craving justification, which God eyes in bestowing it, which is the Redeemer's *bearing iniquity, Isa.* 53. 11. It hath no efficacy of itself, but as it is the band of our union with Christ.

The whole virtue of cleansing proceeds from Christ the object. We receive the water with our hands,

but the cleansing virtue is not in our hands, but in the water; yet the water cannot cleanse us without our receiving it; our receiving it unites the water to us, and is a means whereby we are cleansed. And therefore it is observed that our justification by faith is always expressed in the passive, not in the active; as we *are justified by faith*, not that *faith justifies* us. The efficacy is in Christ's blood, the reception of it in our faith. Though we are justified by faith, yet all our peace, and all those blessings which are bundled up in peace with God, come in and *through our Lord Jesus Christ; Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. 5. 1.*

IV. The improvement.

If the blood of Christ hath the only and perpetual virtue, and actually and perfectly cleanses believers from all sin; then it affords us,

First. A use of instruction.

1. Every man uninterested by faith in the blood of Christ, is *hopeless of a freedom from guilt* while he continues in that state. Without faith we are at a distance from God, by contracting in our natural state a guilt, that subjected us to the curses of the law, and we remain under that wrath the state of nature put us into, till we are interested by faith in the expiating blood of the Redeemer. All the indictments that our own consciences, and, which is incomprehensibly more, the omniscience of God can charge upon us, remain in their full force, are unanswerable by us, and we must inevitably sink under them, till the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, cancel the bond, and rase out the accusation.

The blood of Christ is so far from cleansing an unbeliever from all sin, that it rather binds his sins the faster on him. Unbelief locks the sins on more strongly; so that the violations of the law stick closer to him, and the wrath of God hangs over him. Those that have no communion with Christ, have no interest

in the blood of Christ; for they are such as have *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son* Jesus Christ, to whom John in the text appropriates this privilege of being cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ. Those that slight the blood of Christ, render themselves incapable of cleansing, because no other sacrifice can be offered, no other blood can be presented to God of a value equal to it. *No more sacrifice remains for sin.*

There was but one bloody sacrifice appointed for expiation, and there can be no less required of us for the enjoying the benefit of it, than the *receiving the atonement, Rom.* 5. 11. It is not consistent with the honour of God, to discharge men upon the account of the sufferings of the surety, who will persist in that sin for which the surety suffered; and make use of a Saviour to be freed from suffering, but not freed from offending. It would be contrary to the end of our Saviour's death, to sprinkle that blood upon those that tread it under their feet, which was shed for *the gathering together the sons of God; John* 11. 52. To let the despisers of it have an equal share in the benefits of it with those that receive it. It cannot be imagined that God will ever make it a savour of life, as much to them that will not value it, as to those that do.

2. No freedom from the guilt of sin is to be expected from *mere mercy.* The figure of this was notable in the legal economy. The *mercy-seat* was not to be approached by the high priest *without blood, Deut.* 9. 7. Christ himself, typified by the high-priest, expects no mercy for any of his followers, but by the merit of his blood. What reason have any then to expect remission upon the account of mere compassion, without pleading his blood? Mercy is brought to us only by the smoke of this sacrifice. The very title of justification implies not only mercy, but justice, and more justice than mercy, for justification is not upon a bare petition, but a propitiation. To

be pardoned indeed, implies mercy. Pardon is an act of favour, whereby the criminal is graced and gratified, but to be justified, is to be discharged in a legal way, or by way of compensation. A man may be pardoned as a supplicant, but not pronounced righteous but upon the merits of his cause. He that implores mercy, acknowledges guilt, but insists not upon a righteousness. Justification or pardon is not the act of God as Creator, for then it had been mere mercy, nor as a law-giver, according to the terms of the first covenant, for then no man after his revolted state could be justified; but as a judge, according to the laws of redemption, and that in *a way of righteousness* and justice.

God is not to be sought to for this concern, but in Christ; nor mere mercy implored without the Redeemer's merit, because God does not forgive our sins, or reconcile our persons to himself, but for the propitiating blood of his Son. To expect pardon only upon the account of mercy, is to honour one attribute with the denial of, or over-looking the other. Though God be merciful, yet he is just, his mercy is made known in remission, his justice manifested in justification. Forget not the great demonstration of his justice when you come to plead for mercy; plead both in the blood of Christ, God is merciful to none out of Christ; he is merciful to none but to whom he is just, merciful to them in regard of themselves, and their own demerits: just and righteous to them in regard of the blood and merits of his Son.

3. There is no ground for the *merits of saints, or a cleansing purgatory.* The apostle says not, you have a treasure of the merits of the departed saints. Or you must expect a purgatory hereafter to cleanse you from all your sins. He mentions only the blood of Christ as fully sufficient, and efficacious for this end. To set up other mediations, atonements, satisfactions, is a contempt of the wisdom of God in his ordination of this only one of his Son; of the holiness and justice

of God in accepting this, as if God had mistaken himself, when he cheerfully received this as completely satisfactory to him, and answering his ends: as if notwithstanding his full pleasure with it, it needed some addition from creatures to eke it out to a completeness. It is a dishonour to Christ, accusing him of an imperfect satisfaction, of an insufficient and infirm blood; a stripping it of its infinite value. How can that be infinite, which needs a finite thing to strengthen it, and render it efficacious? He that goes to a muddy stream to wash himself, disgraces the pure fountain he hath in his own dwelling. This the Romanists use in the form of absolution. * *Let the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the saints, and whatsoever good thou hast done, and whatsoever thou hast sustained, be to thee*, i. e. accounted to thee, or accepted for thee, *for the remission of thy sins, the increase of thy grace, and the reward of eternal life.*

Nor is purgatory a *small disparagement* to the extensive virtue of this cleansing blood. If the blood of Christ cleanseth, what interpretation can common reason and sense make of it, but that the person so cleansed is exempted from any punishment for his crime? Is the blood of the Son of God of so weak an efficacy, that it needs a cleansing fire in another world, to purge out the relics of guilt left behind by it in this? If there must be such a penal satisfaction, where is the uncontroulable virtue of this blood? If this blood, which is the blood of God, hath not a sufficient virtue, what finite fire can lay claim to it? What in reason can be supposed to have it? And if it be perfectly purgative, what need of any thing else that can never deserve the name of satisfaction? Shall that God, who is goodness and righteousness itself, punish a man for that crime which he hath remitted upon so great a compensation? If he be pardoned, with what justice can he be punished? If he be pu-

* Cajetan sum. p. 2. The first Head Absolution.

nished by the severity of fire, with what mercy, or by what merit, was he pardoned and justified?

It is no friendship to the perfection of God's justice to alledge that he will punish that which he hath remitted; and as little right is done to the perfection of Christ's meritorious blood, to make it of a half validity, a lame propitiation, which requires something to be done or suffered by the sinner to render it complete in the sight of God. With what face could Christ tell sinners that came believingly to him in the world, that their faith had *saved them*, and they might *go in peace*, if a purgatory satisfaction were to be exacted of them after this life, and his own passion had been unable to make their peace?

4. No *mere creature* can cleanse from sin. No finite thing can satisfy an infinite justice; no finite thing can remit or purchase the remission of an injury against an infinite being. A finite compensation can bear no proportion to an infinite wrong. If pardon as well as regeneration be a work of omnipotence, as we have lately heard; no creature but is as unable to remove guilt from the soul, as it had been unable to remove deformity from the first matter and chaos. A creature can no more cleanse a soul, than it can frame and govern a world, and redeem a captived sinner.

5. There is no *righteousness of our own*, no services we can do, are sufficient for so great a concern. To depend upon any, or all of them, or any thing in ourselves, is injurious to the value and worth of this blood; it is injurious also to ourselves, it is like the setting up a paper wall to keep off a dreadful fire, even that consuming one of God's justice. The apostle doth more than once complain of the seducers that crept into the Galatian church, and would sow the tares of justification by the law, and their own works; so that *they made the death of Christ in vain*, *Gal.* 2. 2, and his work of *no effect*, *Gal.* 5. 4, and tells them there plainly that the expectation of a justification upon such an account, was

a falling from grace. If we are justified from our guilt by works, they must be works before faith, or after faith; not before faith, for the corruption of nature remaining in its full force, without any amendment, any alteration, or subduing by renewing grace, will check men that understand any thing of the woful and deplorable, the weak and impotent condition of man by nature, from such a thought, and indeed those that hold justification by works, make faith in Christ necessary to the acceptance of those works.

Nor do works *after* faith justify, for then a believer is not justified upon his believing, but upon his working after his believing, so that faith then is not the justifying grace, but a preparation to those works which justify, which is quite contrary to the strain of the great apostle in his epistles, who ascribes justification to faith in the blood of Christ, and to faith without works. It is by faith we are united to Christ, as the great undertaker for us, by that we receive the atonement, and accept of the infinite satisfaction made by the Redeemer, to the justice of God. The acceptance of this, and embracing this as done for us, and accepted by God for us, cannot be an act of our works, but of our faith. *All works are excluded by the apostle, Rom.* 4. 5, 6, without restraining them to the works of the law, as he doth sometimes in other places. *Faith alone is opposed to works in general,* and therefore to all sorts of works, and works after grace he doth plainly exclude; *By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; not of works lest any man should boast, Eph.* 2. 8. What works are those? works after regeneration; for they are those works *to which they were created in Jesus Christ;* which indeed, saith he, *God ordained that we should walk in them,* not that we should be saved or justified by them.

And so when he desires not to be found in his *own righteousness which is of the law, Phil.* 3. 8, 9, can he understand only those works and that righteousness which he had before his conversion to Christ?

As though works after faith were not more conformable to the law, than works before faith: but let them be works flowing from what principle soever, he renounceth them all, accounts them loss for Christ, and places no confidence in them. He did not renounce the privileges of his birth, or strip himself of a love to holy works, but of the opinion of any value they had with God of themselves to justification. Whatsoever might come under the title of his own righteousness, he doth cast away, as to any dependance on it, or pleading of it before God. And may not his works, after his giving up his name to Christ, be called his own righteousness, as well as those in a state of nature? Though the principle was altered, yet the acts from that principle, were his own acts, and his own righteousness.

So Abraham was not justified by his works after believing, no more than by those before. *Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, Rom.* 4. 3. For those words cited out of *Gen.* 15. 6, were spoken of Abraham, several years after his call and compliance with it *by faith*; and here singled out as the cause of his justification, without any concomitancy of his own works, flowing from that faith, or any mixture of them, or consideration of them by God, in this justifying act. And David, though he was a great prophet, yet had not so distinct a knowledge of the gospel, as those that live in the times of the gospel; yet under that legal administration, wherein he was born and bred, and lived all his days, had no confidence in his own works, not in those which he wrought as God's servant, out of love to him, fear of him, trust in him, he refuseth all venturing his soul upon them, before the tribunal of God, when he desires God not to enter into judgment with him; *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, Psa.* 143. 2. Answer me in *thy righteousness*, ver. 1, not according to my own.

Enter not into judgment with thy servant; though

I be thy servant, and mine own conscience tells me I have an upright heart towards thee, yet I dare not enter into a plea with thee upon my service, or stand before thy judgment-seat in the strength of my works; and the reason he renders, shows that he understood it of justification, and is inclusive of all men that ever drew breath, for it is as generally expressed as any thing can be; *For in thy sight shall no man living be justified;* not an apostle, martyr, prophet, can stand before God, when he compares his actions with the rule. David was far from any confident sentiments of his own works, or the strength of the blood of legal sacrifices. How often doth he aggravate his crimes, and debase the value of his services, and speak of the sacrifices as unable to render a satisfaction to God? We see the father of the faithful, the greatest type of Christ, and he that seems the most rational among the apostles, disclaiming any justification by their own works, even by those wrought by them after they were really listed in the service of God.

And there is good reason for it.

(1.) No righteousness of man is *perfect*, and therefore no righteousness of man is justifying. Whatsoever works do justify, must be in the extent of them, and all the circumstances fully conformed unto that precept that enjoins them. What man hath a righteousness commensurate with the rule of the law, whereby his works are to be tried? Again, every man, the moment before his justification, is ungodly, *Rom.* 4. 5. He is in that state just before his justification. If he be justified by his own works, he is then justified by ungodly works, and then a contradiction will follow, that a man is justified by his merit of condemnation, and pronounced righteous upon the account of his unrighteousness: it is as much as to say, a man shall be justified by his sinfulness, and be judged an observer of the law by his transgressing it.

[1.] The mixture of *one sinful act* among a multitude of good works, renders a man imperfect, and

consequently incapable *of justification by them.* Suppose a man had only one sin, and all his other works clear without a flaw, the law could not pronounce him righteous, because he fell short of that universal, and perpetual rectitude which the law requires in all thing; *Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them, Gal.* 3. 10. If he fails but in one thing, and that but once in his whole life, and that but in the omission of any one circumstance it requires, he sinks under the curse. But since a man never performed in his whole life a duty entirely exact, with what face can he expect a justification from that law, which he never observed with that exactness due to it in any one action that ever he did? Works are debts, unless a debt be fully paid, a man cannot be said to be righteous person.

If a man owes a thousand pounds, and pays nine hundred ninety-nine pounds, nineteen shillings, and pays not that one shilling, which is as much due as the whole, he is unrighteous in withholding that, and the bond may be put in suit against him for that if the creditor please. What man ever paid the full debt of works he owed to God by virtue of the law? How far is any man from paying all the parts of his debt but one only? Suppose we had not only a perfect work, but many perfect works, all perfect works but one; the works might justify themselves, but not justify the person that hath a stain upon him in the account of the law. But the case is more deplorable; for if God will contend with man, he cannot answer him one of a thousand, *Job.* 9. 2, 3. * Some of the Jews interpret it thus, That the arguments and pleas men can bring from their own works, for their defence before his tribunal, are so weak and trifling, that God in scorn would not vouchsafe to give reply to one plea of theirs among a thousand. But rather it is to be understood, that man cannot render one little

* Mercer.

reason among a thousand pleas for his own justification, on any one of a thousand of those charges God can bring against him.

[2.] There is no one act a man does, but there is *matter of condemnation in it.* As the scripture excepts every man from doing good, as considered in his natural corruption, *Rom.* 3. 12; so it excepts every man from doing any one pure good action; *There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not, Eccles.* 7, 20, i. e. he doth not do any good work without a mixture of sin; and therefore the scripture pronounceth a man's *own righteousness as filthy rags, Isa.* 64. 6. Righteousness in the whole extent of it, whatsoever he does that is righteous in a way of eminency, is but a contemptible and vile shred. And to think it is able to purge the soul from sin, is as much as to think to wash away one mud by another.

That which is condemning, cannot be justifying; that which falls short of the holiness of the law, cannot free us from the condemning sentence of the law; but there is nothing that a man doth but is defective, if compared with the law, which requires an exactness of obedience in every act, without any stain. It requires perfection in the person, and perfection in every service. It allows no blemish, nor pronounceth a man righteous, where it doth not find a completeness both for parts and time: it is so far therefore from justifying, that it must needs condemn. *For the righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in every one of us, Rom.* 8. 4. Whatsoever plea we can raise from our own works, will represent us guilty, and that can never be the matter of our absolution, which hath sufficient matter of condemnation in it. Attainted work is never able to maintain its standing before the infinite holiness of God.

[3.] All the works *after grace, fall short of the perfection required* in them by the law. I do not say they fall altogether short of the perfection required

in them by the gospel, i. e. fall short of that integrity and sincerity which is our evangelical perfection; but they fall short of that perfection which is required by the law. There is no grace in any renewed man in this life, in that perfect degree it ought to be. Corruption of nature remains in every man, with regeneration of nature: it is true, there is a new principle put in, but not so powerful as to abolish that principle which possessed us before, though it doth over-master it. There is a *flesh lusting against the spirit*, as well as a *spirit lusting against the flesh*, *Gal.* 5. 17. And Paul, that was renewed as much as any man we ever knew renewed, had a flesh that served the law of sin, with a mind that served the law of God, *Rom.* 7. 25. No grace is wrought to its full growth. There is staggering in our faith, and coldness in our love, and hardness in our melting; and therefore it was a good speech of Luther's; We can never be saved, if God doth not turn his eyes from our virtues, as well as from our sins.

* How can that, the unrighteousness whereof was our burden before the throne of God, be our righteousness before him? How can that heal us, which stands in need of cure, and renders us sick? *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* Or the highest righteousness out of an unclean newness, and an imperfect regeneration? If our duties after grace be so corrupt, that they need something to render them acceptable, and accepted in the sight of God; they can never be of that worth, as to render our persons righteous; for that which needs something to make itself valid, can never make any other thing valid. If our duties want a pardon, and something to cover the defects, and wipe off the blemishes of them, they can never upon any foundation of their own, plead themselves to be a sufficient righteousness for a guilty sinner, guilty in the acting that which is pleaded as

* Illyricus.

a righteousness. No flesh can be justified in the sight of God; and nothing that comes from flesh can be our righteousness. The best man being in part flesh, all his works are in part fleshly: where the nature is wholly corrupt, the fruit cannot be good; where the nature is in part corrupt, the fruit of the new nature must be tinctured by the steams of the old, and therefore is too defective to found our happiness upon.

And consider but these two things.

Men's own consciences cannot but accuse them of coming short of the glory of God, in every thing they do. Can any man upon earth say, he ever did a perfect action that he dares venture his soul upon it, in the presence of God? There is no man's conscience but must needs accuse him of sin: *He that saith he hath no sin, hath* nothing of *the truth in him*, 1 *John* 1. 8; and what man's conscience ever bore that testimony to him, that he was perfect in all his works? Does it not rather witness that he hath numberless times violated the divine precepts? Who can say he did perfectly exert an act of faith, so entire, fixed, steady, as might suit the divine holiness, or that his love had such an intense flame in any service he presented to God? No man yet, upon serious consideration, did ever judge any one of his works perfect before God. He must have very mean thoughts of the holiness of God, or be very inconsiderate of his own actions, and not dive into all the matter and circumstances of them, if he so judged. Indeed, Paul saith, he knew nothing by himself, i. e. of unfaithfulness in declaring the mysteries of God, as to the matter and substance of them, yet would he not venture his justification upon that bottom, 1 *Cor.* 4. 4. A self justification in this, would be a self condemnation. *If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse, Job* 9. 20.

But, suppose there be no accusations of conscience,

durst we stand to God's trial of our works? The omniscience of God pierceth further than our knowledge; for who can understand the errors of his ways? *Psal.* 19. 12. If any action might be perfect in our account, shall we therefore think it so in the account of God's unspotted holiness, who is greater than our hearts, and knows more than our hearts? Who can stand before so holy a God? 1 *Sam.* 6. 20. Job therefore would not know his own soul, though he were perfect, he would not approve, or boast of himself in the presence of God, *Job* 9. 21. For he might be ignorant of something in his own spirit, which never yet reached his notice, but was not unknown to God that knew all things; he would despise his life, i. e. overlook all his upright course, and bury it in silence, when he comes to appear before God.

[4.] Since therefore all our own righteousness is of this hue, it would be contrary to the justice and holiness of God, *to justify a man for imperfect works.* His *judgment* is always *according to truth, Rom.* 2. 2. If he should judge and accept that for a perfect righteousness which is notoriously imperfect in itself, it would imply a defect in the understanding of the judge, whereby he is changed, and judges that to be exact holiness now, which he judged not so before: but certainly if it be an imperfect righteousness, the infinite understanding of God can never imagine it perfect, and the holiness of God would never deceive itself, in accepting that as perfect, which is not in its own nature so. If imperfect works of grace can justify now, what reason can be rendered for the strictness God required of the first man, in the first covenant, and his severe dealing with him upon the transgression of it?

The best reason, and the most becoming the majesty of God, is the holiness of his nature, which is as infinite now, as when he made the first covenant. If that holiness can now content itself with an imperfect

righteousness, and pronounce us justified persons, without a full conformity to the law; it might take a little further step, and pronounce us righteous, without any conformity at all to it. If he could deny his holiness and truth in one thing, he might upon the same account deny it in all, and so lay it aside by degrees, till it came to nothing. If we rightly understand the infiniteness of God's holiness, we cannot conceive that any thing imperfect can justify us, before so exact and strict a tribunal, where sits the omniscience of God to see, the holiness of God to hate, and the justice of God to punish every defect and deviation from his law.

(2.) The design of God was to justify us in such a way as to strip us of *all matter of glorying in ourselves*, and therefore it is not by any righteousness of our own. This the apostle in many places asserts. *Rom.* 3. 26, 27. He justifies by the law of faith, to exclude boasting, which would not have been excluded by the law of works. *Not of works lest any man should boast*, *Eph.* 2. 9. He had before spoken of salvation or justification by grace, ver. 5. And to prevent them from resting on any thing in themselves, and put our own righteousness out of countenance, he repeats it again, *By grace ye are saved, and that not of yourselves; not of works*, ver. 8, because God will have all boasting excluded; the apostle's argument holds as strong against the works of grace, as those of nature; the works after the receiving of the gospel, as those of the law; it would else be invalid; for if we were justified by our own works, wrought by us after the grace of redemption communicated to us, it would but little more exclude boasting, than the works of Adam, wrought by him in the rectitude of his nature, which was the gift of God to him.

The natural principle of his actions, as well as the gracious principle of a believer's, were bestowed on them by God; that was an act of God's goodness, this of his grace: and they are our works by grace,

as well as the acts of Adam in innocence, would have been his works by nature. For though the works of grace are wrought from a principle implanted by the Spirit of God, yet they are not the works of that spirit, no more than Adam's works could be said to be the works of God, because they were from a principle implanted in him by God. The works would have been Adam's by the concurrence of God as Creator, and those works are a believer's by the concurrence of God as Redeemer: and if we were justified by them, there would be as well matter of boasting, as there would have been in Adam had he stood, and been efficiently justified or pronounced righteous upon his innocent works. God hates any glorying before him.

The Pharisee therefore that displayed his righteousness in the temple before God, with some kind of reflection upon his own worth, *Luke* 18. 10, 11, 12, with some kind of exaltation of himself, and contempt of the publican, went away unjustified, though he thankfully acknowledged his eminence in morality above the publican, to stream to him from the goodness of God; and no good man in scripture ever pleaded his own works in prayer to God for his justification: though sometimes they have appealed to God concerning their integrity in a particular action. Daniel disowns his own righteousness, *Dan.* 9. 18. And the famous Cardinal * and champion of the Romish church, upon his death-bed would rely on the merits of Christ, though he had disputed for the merit of works. So sensible are men of the little matter they have to glory of in themselves, when they are ready to stand before the tribunal of God. God in justification will have the entire glory of his grace to himself; but if any work of ours, though never so gracious, were the cause but in part of our justification, we had whereof to glory. If we divided it be-

* Bellarmine.

tween Christ and ourselves, Christ would have but half the glory, and the other half would be due to us.

To conclude, no man can be justified, but by a covenant of grace, and by the *righteousness of God, not his own;* since all men have been under the corruption of original sin, no man has arrived to happiness by any righteousness of his own. Every man being a sinner, is under the curse of the law, and being accursed by it, cannot be justified by it. The law does not frown and smile upon a man at one and the same time. It proposes no recompence, but to those that entirely observe it, and denounces a curse upon those that in the least violate it; it accuses, does not justify, and fills the conscience with darkness and despair, not with comfort and peace.

We are therefore justified by a righteousness *imputed to us. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* It is not inherent in us, but in the veins of Christ: it is not physically or corporally applied to us, but juridically, in a judicial way, and therefore imputed to us, and that for justification. Hence we are said to be *justified by his blood, Rom.* 5. 9; if justified by his blood, then meritoriously; the merit of that blood must then be imputed to us, and we upon the account of it pronounced righteous by God, since this blood was never inherent in us. Hence *forgiveness of sins, and justification* is often ascribed unto it, *Rom.* 3. 23, 24, 25. *Col.* 1. 14. As our iniquities were charged upon him, so his righteousness is derived to us. Our iniquities were never inherent in him, but imputed to him: so his blood never was inherent in us, but imputed to us for the satisfaction of the law, and so for our justification from the penalty and curse of it.

If it were our righteousness that were imputed to us, it would be an imputation of debt, not of grace. *Rom.* 4. 4. It cannot be inherent righteousness, because it is a righteousness imputed *without works,*

ver. 6. But no inherent righteousness is without works. Again, ver. 5, the object of justification is an ungodly person, one that has no righteousness of his own. But since there must be a complete righteousness to justify him, it must be the righteousness of another; for being ungodly, it cannot be his own. It is therefore by the righteousness of one man Christ. As we are made *sinners by one man's disobedience*, so we are made *righteous by one man's obedience*, *Rom.* 5. 19. Our being made sinners by one man's disobedience, was no personal act of our own, but a personal act of Adam's; so we are made righteous not by a personal obedience of our own, but by the perpetual obedience of Christ, which cannot be of advantage to us, unless some way or other counted to us.

Secondly. Use of comfort. The comfort of a believer has a *strong and lasting foundation* in the blood of Christ. All our sins met upon Christ as they did upon the scape-goat, and were carried away with the streams of his blood. A cleansing blood was not the language of the first covenant. It required blood to be poured out in a way of revenge, not to be poured out, and applied for the pardon of others. What can relieve us, if this blood shed by a Holy Saviour, and accepted by a righteous Judge cannot? This blood has removed the curse, purchased our liberty, and may therefore calm every believing conscience. What expression can be more stored with comfort than this, *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

1. The title is *cheering*. The blood of *Jesus Christ, his Son:* the titles of the blood of God, and the righteousness of God, are enough to answer all objections, and testify a virtue in it as incomprehensible as that of his godhead, which elevated it to an infinite value. What wounds are so deep, that they cannot be healed by the sovereign balsam of so rich a blood? What sins are too great to be expiated, and what

diseases too desperate to be cured by the blood of him, that created the world? How great is that blood, that must have more of value, since it is the blood of the Son of God, than all sins can have of guilt, since they are the sins of the sons of men? The blood of Christ is as much above the guilt of our sins, as the excellency of his person is above the meanness of ours.

2. And who can *fathom* the comfort that is in the extensiveness of the object? All sin. As we are not limited in the Lord's prayer, to pray for the forgiveness of some debts only, and not for others, but pray for the forgiving of trespasses indefinitely; so there is no stint set to the virtue of this cleansing blood. All transgressions to it are like a grain of sand, or the drop of a bucket to the ocean; no more seen or distinguished when it is swallowed up by that mass of waters. It is a *plenteous redemption*, since it redeems Israel, and all the Israel of God from all their iniquities, *Psal.* 130. 7, 8: his blood can cleanse as many sins as his godhead can create worlds, and those are numberless: since there is no limits to his power, there can be none to his blood. Though our sins have weakened the law, and made it unable to save us, yet they cannot weaken the omnipotent satisfaction of the Redeemer.

The *multitude* of sins in the sinner enhance the vastness of the payment made by the surety. Let not any believing soul be dejected, or any soul that would cordially believe, and resign himself up to the conduct of Christ. That blood that has cleansed so many from sin, and from such multitudes of sins in their several capacities, can cleanse you from all your sins, were they as great as all those jointly that have been cleansed by it from the beginning of the world. For what hindrance is there, but that it can do the same in one person that it hath done in many? When we look upon the multitude of our sins, our pride, and vain imaginations, our omissions of service, our

carelessness in the ways of God; there cannot but be a despondency, till we lift up our eyes to the cross, and see all balanced by the blood of the Son of God, which cannot be overtopped by the guilt of a believing person.

3. And does not the word *cleanse*, deserve a particular consideration? What does that note but,

(1.) Perfection. It cleanses their guilt so that it shall *not be found*, *Jer.* 50. 20. What can justice demand more of us, more of our Saviour, than what hath been already paid? The everlasting death of a believing sinner cannot be challenged by it, since the blood of a redeeming Saviour hath been shed for it. It were injustice to put the creature upon an imperfect satisfaction, since the surety hath given a complete one; and injustice to punish him that is no longer guilty of a crime in the judgment of the law of redemption, since by faith he relies upon the blood of the Redeemer. Justice can no more condemn any that are objects of mercy, by receiving the blood of the second covenant; than mere mercy can save any one that remains an object of revenging justice under the first covenant. By this means we do not stand before God only as innocent persons, but as those that have fulfilled the law, both as to precept and penalty, *Rom.* 8. 4.

(2.) *Continuance* of justification. The present tense implies a continued act. Christ's blood is never lost and congealed, as the blood of the legal sacrifices. His blood is called *a new way*, *Heb.* 10. 19, 20, προσφατος; the word rendered *new* signifies a thing newly slain or sacrificed. His blood is as new and fresh for the work it was appointed to, as when it was shed upon the cross: as full of vigour as if it had been shed but this moment: it is a blood that was not drunk up by the earth, but gathered up again into his body* to be a living, pleading, cleansing blood in

* Dr. Jackson.

the presence of God for ever. He did not leave his body and blood putrifying in the grave, the sacrifice had then ceased and corrupted; it had not been of everlasting efficacy, as now it is.

The justification of a believer stands upon as certain terms as the justification of Christ himself before God. His was upon the account of shedding his blood, ours upon the account of embracing his blood. He was justified by God after his bleeding, *Isa.* 50. 6, 8, and brought in triumphing and sending a challenge to any to condemn him, since God had justified him, ver. 9, which words, the apostle alludes to *Rom.* 8. 33, 34, to show the unrepeatableness of justification, and applies them to believers, though they were spoken by Christ in his own case. Christ was justified by his resurrection; *justified in the Spirit*, 1 *Tim.* 3.16, which is no other than what Peter expresseth by being *quickened in the Spirit*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 18. As Christ was justified by his resurrection from all the sins which met upon him on the cross, and that for ever; so are believers cleansed from all their guilt, and that for ever, by virtue of this blood; the meritorious plea of this blood continuing for ever, is not without the perpetual act of the righteous judge, justifying those for whom it is pleaded.

Hence will follow security at the last judgment. His blood cleanses from all sin here, and his voice shall absolve from all sin hereafter. He that has been a propitiation for your guilt, and an advocate against your accusers, shall never as a judge condemn you for your sins: he does not indeed judge as a priest, but as a king: but his kingly power is but subservient to his priestly office, since he was more solemnly confirmed in that, viz. by an oath, than in the other; and therefore his royal authority shall never ruin any, whom his priestly sacrifice has restored to their lost inheritance. Let no believing soul therefore despond; let him draw the virtues of this blood over his fears to stifle them, as God has done over his sins to

cancel them, and drown them in this same ocean into which God hath hurled his transgressions.

Thirdly. Use. Of exhortation.

Have recourse only to this blood *upon all occasions*, since it only is able to cleanse us from all our guilt. We have treasured up wrath, and wounded conscience: Nothing can pacify a severe wrath, and calm a tempestuous conscience, but this blood. Had we but the guilt of one sin upon us, we stood in need of an expiation by it, as well as if we had ten thousand. Every infinite wrong must have an infinite satisfaction. Entertain no disparaging and little thoughts of this blood, which the scripture pronounceth of so plenteous, unsearchable, and great a virtue. It was God's intent to cleanse sin by it, when he agreed with the Redeemer about shedding his blood; *My righteous servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities, Isa.* 53. 11. It was set out by him to this end, when it was shed; *In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David, Zech.* 13. 1, the stronger spirits, and men most according to God's heart, *and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the weaker sort; for all a fountain, to fill every private cistern. Make not the covenant of God with his Son in vain; slight not his grace by refusing to drink of his open fountain.

The glory of purifying from all iniquity was reserved by God for this blood, it is committed to no other. The blood of bulls and goats never had, never could have the honour of so great a work. It is the glorious title of his blood, to cleanse from all sins, as it is the honourable signification of his name Jesus, to save from all sins. We cannot please God more, than by coming to him for the pardon of our sins upon the account of this blood he has so delighted to honour. If we do not, we deny it the glory of its cleansing virtue: we undervalue the efficacy of it, and would have it without any subject to exercise its power on. We need not fear to approach to it, since

God hath manifested it highly acceptable to him, and available for us. The unsearchable riches of it should more encourage us, than the greatness of our guilt discourage our address.

Then have recourse to it by faith, resting on the power of this blood as a means appointed by God, and intended by Christ for the expiation of sin. Faith as accepting Christ as a king does not justify, but faith as accepting Christ as a priest and sacrifice, as shedding his blood; for we must accept him in that office, wherein he made the atonement, and that was not as he was a prophet, or a king, but as he was a priest, and a sacrifice; and therefore it is called, *faith in his blood, Rom. 3. 25*, though indeed a faith in his blood is not without receiving him as a king, and submitting to his precepts, as well as relying on his sacrifice. He that receives the blood of Christ, as well as he that names the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity, and avoid those things which break the covenant, not mingling any thing with his satisfaction.

If we look for a justification by any thing else, we forfeit all right of justification *by him; Behold I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing, Gal. 5. 2.* Take it for a certain truth, for I as an apostle speak it, that if you have an opinion that you shall be justified by circumcision, or any thing of the law, or of your own works, or would make them partakers with Christ in this matter, Christ shall profit you nothing, you had as good never have had a Christ made known to you for any virtue you are like to derive from him. As none died with him to expiate your guilt, so he will suffer none to be joined with him in justifying your persons. Christ bears this blood only in his hand, when he pleads for us; we should carry this blood only in our hearts, when we plead for ourselves. It is not his blood only as shed doth justify, but his blood pleaded in the court of heaven by himself, and pleaded before the throne

of God by the believing sinner; without it, we have no more plea than the apostate angels have, whom God hath cast out of his favour for ever.

And since we contract guilt every day, let us daily apply the medicine. The pleas of this blood are renewed according to the necessity of our persons. As often as an Israelite had been bitten by the fiery serpents, he must have looked up to the brazen one, if he would not have been destitute of a cure; and we upon every sting of conscience must look up to him who hath been lifted up upon the cross for our remedy. This blood is appointed for sins after conversion, for those that walk in the light. Since the fountain is open every day, and we contract guilt every day, let not a day pass without fresh applications of this blood upon any defects in our walking with him; since, *if we walk in the light*, and are industrious to observe the will of God, *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

CHRISTIAN

OBEDIENCE.

John 15. 14.

YE ARE MY FRIENDS, IF YE DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU.

THE NATURE OF OBEDIENCE.

Connection and import of the text—The obedience enjoined—Must be positive—Sincere—Affectionate—unconstrained—Free opposed to constraint—Free opposed to dulness—Activity and ardour—Constant—In sinning times—In times of suffering—The subject of obedience—The object of it—Obedience must be maintained in the true meaning and design of it—And however contemptible in the eye of the world—The person commanding—Inferences—The excellence of religion—Obedience a privilege—The disobedient inexcusable—The comfort of obedience—Incentives to it—Various directions.

THE words are a part of Christ's discourse after the supper he had instituted. The chapter begins with a parable, wherein Christ likens himself to a vine, and the disciples (and consequently all believers) to branches. The using this parable was occasioned,

as some think, by Christ's passing by some vineyards, whence he raises a discourse to spiritualize their meditations upon the view of the creatures. Whether this were so or no, yet the discourse is excellent, both to show the near union and relation of Christ and believers, and the way and means of a spiritual growth in sanctification and holiness. Christ was sent into the world to publish a new religion, but not a lazy, but a fruitful one. God the Father is the husbandman, who both dresseth the vine, and purgeth the branches, to render them fruitful. Several arguments he useth to engage them to abide in him, and consequently to be fruitful.

1. From their misery without it, ver. 6. The fire is the portion of unfruitful branches; *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire.*

2. From the prevalency of their prayers with God, if his words did practically and fruitfully abide in them; *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you,* ver. 7.

3. From the *glory of God, and honour of Christ, which are furthered by it,* ver. 8. When what you ask is in order to your own fruitfulness, and consequently God's glory, you need not fear the grant of your requests. *Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples.*

4. From gratitude, since he had given them, and was yet further to give them, the highest demonstration of his affection to them, ver. 9. You have had evidence of my Father's love to me in his witnessing my mission from heaven by multitudes of miracles, and such a kind of love as my Father bears to me, I do, and will bear to you, if you continue to be *my disciples:* and all the proof of it I demand of you, is, the continuance in my commands, and the performance of them: *If you keep my commandments, you*

shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's will, and abide in his love, ver. 10. If you would have such a kind of love from me, as I have had from my Father, you must perform such a kind of obedience to me as I have performed to my Father; you must make me a pattern of imitation, and my precept the rule of your actions. And *do not think*, saith he, ver. 11, that what I have spoken of to you, is so much out of an *authority*, or an imperiousness, as out of an *affection* to you and your interest; it is not that I should have an advantage, but that you should have a *joy;* that such a joy as you have felt in my presence with you, and in my redeeming work, may constantly remain in you. Now the way to have this joy, is to keep my commandments; fruitfulness will clear up your interest in me, and especially the observance of that command *of a mutual love to one another*, ver. 12, to which you have the highest obligation from my love to you, ver. 13, for *greater love* can no man show, *than to lay down his life for his friend*, and you shall see I will not be backward to discover this highest affection to you; and as I discover my affection to you in laying down my life, so you can discover your affections to me only by observing my commands.

So that the verse lies between two arguments to urge them to it.

1. His own love to them, which was of the highest stamp, ver. 13. 2. The revelation he had made to them, which was the fullest; *All things that he had heard of his Father*, ver. 15; and the clearest, *those he had made known to them*; so that you have my love to oblige you, and my revelation to direct you; as I have had love to purchase what you want, so you must have love to perform what I order. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* He invites them to it by an honourable title of friends. You shall be ranked in the number of them, and con-

tinue in this dignity, *if you keep my commandments.* I do not press this of loving one another, that you should perform this only, and neglect the rest; for you are not my friends in the practice of one of my precepts, unless you also join the practice of other precepts to it.

Ye are my friends. *Actively*, you will declare and manifest yourselves to be my friends in conforming yourselves to my mind. *Passively*, I will declare myself to you. * I have treated you as friends, in imparting the counsels of God to you, not known to others. It is fit you should treat me as your friend, in gratifying me in obedience to my commands. The dignity of a friend to Christ may well soften the hardness of a command. He doth not so call them friends, as that they should forget that they are his servants, and he their Lord: for as he mentions friendship as their privilege, so he mentions his will by the way of a command to make them sensible of their duty; *If you do whatsoever I command you.* It is a great honour, says Austin, to call those his friends whom he knows to be his servants.

Ye.

1. *All* of ye. It is universal. Men are too narrow to have many intimates, but the heart of Christ is large enough for all. Friendship with Christ is the privilege of every obedient person.

2. *Ye*, though poor, considered as men. Outward distress is no hinderance to spiritual relation.

3. Ye *disciples*, apostles, employed for God, yet not my friends, unless ye obey me. Not gifts, but grace; not the highest employment, but exact practice interests men in this privilege.

Ye *are*, not shall be. You are doth not exclude the future, but assures them of it. They shall be, because they are; it is not a thing to be waited for, but at present possessed.

* Musculus.

If you do whatsoever I command you. * Adam had a precept, which if he had kept, he had continued in the love of God; and Christ hath given us precepts, which if we keep, we shall continue in the love of Christ. Obedience is necessary, not by way of merit, but condition. He shows how grateful obedience is to him, because he dignifies the practiser of it with such a title, which how honourable is it for us, and how necessary for our welfare.

The text is made up of privilege and duty, relation and action. 1. *Privilege* and *relation. Friends.* 2. *Duty* and *action.* If ye do.

Observe, 1, How *glorious* is the relation of a holy soul to Christ! He does not say, I love you if you keep my commandments. A man may love his servant, or his beast, but admits them not to special friendship; the condition of the one, and incapacity of the other, will not suffer it. This title is higher than an assurance of a bare love. He loves them as friends as well as servants.

3. How *condescending* is the love of Christ! He calls the worms of the earth the friends of God. We cannot be his servants, unless we keep his commands; and by keeping his commands we commence a higher degree than that of servants, even that of friends.

3. Christ's *commands*, not his deeds, are the object of our obedience. Set not before you what I do, but what I order you to do: our conformity to Christ consists not so much in an imitation of what he did, as in an obedience to what he prescribes; the example of Christ is not our rule without the precept of Christ. Some actions of Christ are inimitable, but all his commands are obeyable.

4. *Privilege* is entailed only to duty.

That which I intend is only the *nature of obedience*, as deducible from these words, *If ye do whatsoever I command you.*

* Muscul.

1. *Do.*

1. Obedience must be *positive*. Not only avoid what I prohibit. It consists not merely in not bringing forth bad fruit, but in bringing forth good: It is not enough to forbear the commissions of sin, if we are guilty of the omissions of duty. The fig-tree was not cursed because it brought forth bad fruit, but because it brought forth no fruit, *Matt.* 21. 19. No father will be content with his child in forbearing what he forbids, unless he also performs what he prescribes. Many, like the pharisees, please themselves with negatives, I am not prophane, a drunkard, swearer; but what title is procured to the privilege in the text, if as much cannot be spoken of positives, as may be of negatives? We must be as careful to do what he wills, as to shun what he hates. He never *puts off the old man* cordially, that hath not also *put on the new*, *Colos.* 3. 8, 10. It is not a true friendship to omit what may displease a friend, if we do not also what may gratify him. God would have an obedience from us suitable to the happiness he promiseth us. He doth not only free us from hell and wrath, but invest us with heaven and happiness; so he would have us not only be delivered from sin, but created to good works. And you know that our Saviour is not only called Jesus, because *he saves from sin*, *Matt.* 1. 21, but Christ, because he is appointed by God to govern, fit, and prepare souls for heaven.

2. Do it as friends. Obedience must be *sincere*. An action may look like a friendly act, when there is nothing of friendship and good will in the heart. Every precept requires not only an outward, but an inward conformity; not only a bodily action, but a spiritual frame; God would not have the skin of a sacrifice without the flesh and entrails, nor the body of obedience without truth in the *inward parts*, *Psal.* 51. 6. Christ intends not only an outward appearance, but respects the form of every action. Duties are not differenced by the outward garb, but inward

frame. Waters may have the same colour, yet one may be sweet, and the other brackish. Two apples may have the same colour, yet one may be a crab, and the other of a delightful relish. A serpent hath a speckled skin, but an inward poison. We must look to the rule, that the matter of our actions be suited to it, otherwise we may commit gross wickedness, as they did, who thought they did God *good service by killing his righteous servants*, *John* 16. 2. We must also look to the frame of our hearts, otherwise we may be guilty of gross hypocrisy. A friendly action cannot come from the heart of an enemy, no more than good fruit from a corrupt tree. It may have a specious appearance when the heart is not only devoid of all corresponding spirituality, but remains the seat of all impurity and every abomination. Christ cannot count any service from an unsound heart of any worth. A multitude of them are but as cyphers, signify nothing without a figure in the front; *The heart of a wicked man is little worth*, *Prov.* 10. 20. Sound actions cannot spring from a corrupt heart, no more than sweet water from a bitter fountain. He that considers not how his heart stands, whether it were wound up, whether it were in tune, whether it were melted, or whether it were frozen, that doth not care how drowsy and unsavoury his spirit was, doth not any thing as a friend to Christ.

3. Do as friends. Obedience must be *affectionate*. It must be love *out of a pure mind*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 5. In the command of charity, which is the special command before the text, the greatest outward assistances are of no value without this ingredient, but the least with it are highly accepted. *A cup of cold water*, *Mat.* 10. 42, a little box of ointment with an affectionate respect to God, are valued and registered. As mercies are not welcome to a good man without God's love in them; so our services are not welcome to God without our love in them.

A little bread and drink with God's love, is better than great riches with his displeasure. Job's boils and rags with God's love, were richer than his enemies' robes; and a starving Lazarus better than a rich epicure. A drop of service with affection to God, is more worth than all the works of men without it. It is no argument of friendship for a man to send a rich cabinet to another with something in it, to which he knows his friend hath an antipathy; splendid services to Christ without glowing affections are of the same nature.

Christ would have us imitate him, he gives himself with his special mercies, and we must give ourselves with our special duties. But how often are some duties performed not out of love to Christ, but love to ourselves? Judas's carrying the bag might be one cause of Judas's obedience to Christ, that he might get some advantage by it; and when he saw a greater offered by the pharisees, he deserted and betrayed him. *Fac me episcopum Romanum*, saith one, *& ero christianus.* When men pretend service to God to catch preferments from men, when they make a profession of religion to cheat more craftily; *ut sub christiano nomine lucrosius pereant;* this is not to do what Christ commands, but what we affect.

4. Do. Not be constrained to do, but do willingly, *freely.* What Paul would not have servants give to their masters, *Eph. 6. 6*, that many men give to God, an eye service. While men have some serious thoughts of God's omniscience, they may pay him some service, as a servant may work while his master's eye is upon him, or his feet at the door; but make a mock at him when his back is turned. Or they may do it out of fear of judgment, this may be a motive to quicken, but not the spring to give the first life to our obedience. A man may be very free in obedience, but upon a wrong motive; as school-boys may get their lessons well one day, not out of love to

their books, but that they may play the next; or as a child at play, called by his father to go upon an errand, runs faster than his father would have him, puts himself all in a sweat, this might be thought a very free and willing obedience; but it is not so much obedience to his father, as a gratifying himself in a speedy return to his game, and pursuance of it without any more disturbance. Or there may be a readiness when an obedience will suit to corruption; this is such an obedience as the devil is for; he was much for Job's trial, which God was also for; God orders him to deprive Job of his estate, that thereby his sincerity might be evidenced to the world; and the devil conforms himself to God's order out of malice to ruin him, hoping that hypocrisy would issue out instead of sincerity.

(1.) There is a *freedom* as opposed to constraint. It is not the act itself, but the naturalness of it is a sign of obedience. A constrained obedience may consist with a devilish nature, and therefore cannot be a sign of a friendship to Christ. The devil obeys God but by force; he is forced to a negative obedience, and sometimes to a positive obedience; not by any conscience of a command, but by a constraint by God's power, as *Luke* 8. 28, when Christ commanded him to come out of his long-possessed habitation. There may be a constraint by education, which is scarce sensible, when that upon a prophane man is more visible. As a rugged stone will move no further than a strong arm will throw it, so a prophane man moves no farther than his conscience, or some fear of man throws him in any duty of obedience. But a man that hath the advantage of a religious education, is like a stone smoothed into a right figure, that moves upon a plain at the least touch; yet there is constraint goes to that motion, though not so sensible, because the parts are by an outward smoothness fitted for such a motion; so it is with a man that is smoothed by education.

But the obedience Christ requires, is to be free; good actions are therefore called fruits of righteousness, fruits of holiness, because as a tree brings forth fruits naturally, so doth a true christian bring forth righteousness; the gardener helps indeed by watering and digging, but doth not constrain the tree, God helps the man at the first conversion, but doth not force the soul. In *Gal.* 5. 19, 22, it is observed that sins are called works, and graces are called fruits, to show the freedom of a holy, and the servile frame of a wicked man. A good man is not put upon a duty merely by a sudden fit and importunity of conscience; as wicked men naturally lay in provision for their lusts, so do good men labour to lay in provision for their obedience and graces. The law, like a school-master, scourgeth some truant souls to obedience, but the gospel gives a *willingness of spirit in the day of power*, *Psal.* 110. 3. The difference between these two powers is, the law is a powerful constrainer, mixed with severe threatenings that drive to fear, and the gospel is a powerful constraint, mixed with kind promises which help to love.

(2.) Freedom as opposed to *dulness and heaviness.* God's delight in a holy person is rendered as one reason of his mercy; *He delivered me, because he delighted in me*, *Psa.* 18. 19; and our delight in Christ should be the reason of our duty. *If ye do whatsoever I command you.* It is not a lumpish and heavy action that Christ requires, he requires such an obedience of us as himself performed to his Father; *If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love*, *John* 15. 10; that was not a heavy motion, it was *his meat and drink to do his Father's will*, *John* 4. 34. Meat and drink are not only naturally desired, but delightfully received. Cheerfulness accompanies election of a thing; *I have chosen thy precepts, and thy law is my delight*, *Psal.* 119. 173, 174. Lumpishness is a sign we never chose it, but were forced to it. Sin is sweet to a

wicked man, as a dainty to a glutton's palate, *John* 10. 12. He accounts duty his burden, and a true disciple accounts it his honour. He, like the sun, rejoiceth to run, and when he is in service, his heart cries out with Peter in the mount, *It is good to be here:* such cheerfulness in service procures cheerfulness in mercies; *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and works righteousness, Isa.* 64. 5. He puts to his hand to help such an one. Christ loves not melancholy and phlegmatic service, such a temper in acts of obedience is a disgrace to God and to religion; to God, it betrays us to have jealous thoughts of God, as though he were a hard master; to religion, it makes others think duties are drudgeries, and not privileges. Well then, so much of cheerfulness in obedience, so much of a christian temper; so much of dulness, so much of an antichristian frame.

The disciples of Christ have not this liveliness in a constant equality; the wings of the soul drenched in sin, as well as the wings of a bird bemired, will flag. A good man's heaviness is from infirmities and distempers. A strong active man may be laid upon his sick bed, and be loath to be stirred. But a carnal man's heaviness is from nature and willingness. A wicked man's heaviness is at his duty, a good man's heaviness is at his own deficiency, his delight consists in the spirit, for the flesh is weak, and will never in this world be otherwise.

5. *Do whatsoever I command.* Not *lazily.* Obedience must be diligent. God cares not for a slow obedience, he would not therefore have an ass offered in sacrifice, *Exod.* 13. 13, but would have it redeemed with a lamb, or the neck of it broke. A true christian is like a seraphim, that hath six wings to fly upon God's errands, *Isa.* 6. 2, or like the living creatures, *Ezek.* 1. 14, that ran and returned at the appearance of a flash of lightning, which is the quickest motion. Sound members move at the command of

the will, whereas palsy members must be dragged along. Man naturally would have a ready God, and not a ready heart, he would have a God ready to attend his complaints, but would not have a heart ready to attend God's commands. But good men take God at a word of precept, when he hath any work for them to do, as well as at a word of promise, when they have any wants for him to supply. Hypocrites may be obedient in promises, as the son in the gospel, *Mat.* 21. 29, 30, that promised to go into the vineyard. A good man doth more without open resolving; another resolves more without open doing. A master will take it ill if a servant disputes his commands. Paul set about the work he was ordered, quickly; *I consulted not with flesh and blood, Gal.* 1. 16, he called not *flesh and blood* into a cabinet council.

What we do for Christ, we must do without advising with corruption, which is an enemy to God and his ways. Such counsellors will furnish us with evasions to slip from our duty, and represent things either impossible or unseasonable; either that it cannot be done at all, or else it may be better at another time: and as it is said of our own nation, we lose more by treaties than we gain by war; so it may be said of our corruption, we lose more by such treaties than we gain by an open war against it. God would employ Moses though he had a slow speech, but checks him for his slow obedience. Abraham was as quick in his observance of God's command, as Moses was slow; *The self-same day wherein* he had received the command of circumcision, he put it in practice, *Gen.* 17. 23; he would make no pauses, lest carnal reason should step in with objections. The readiness of the Gentiles to obey Christ, is expressed, *As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me, Psa.* 18. 44: like Elisha, who upon Elijah's spreading his mantle over him, leaves his father, and oxen, and

plough, and runs after him. The more of fire there is in any thing, the more active it is, the more of a divine spirit, the more vigorous.

6. *Do whatsoever I command. Constantly*, not do it for a spurt, or by fits and starts. Obedience must be constant; it is that which God longs for; *O that there were such a heart in them, that they would keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, Deut. 5. 29*; and it will never be well with a man, till he doth it.

(1.) In *sinning times* it should be most conspicuous. Good men should *shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, Phil. 2. 15.* The stars shine clearest in the darkest, if unclouded nights. Good men are like fountains, hottest in the coldest seasons. When did David love and esteem God's precepts, but when men had *made void his law? Psa. 119. 126, 127, 128.* He would double his valuation of, and obedience to God's commands, when he saw them most violated by others: he brings in a double *therefore; Therefore I love thy commandments above gold: therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.* The more men despised them, the more he valued them, because he knew they were most dear to God, since they were most hateful to man. David had been refreshed by God when he was afflicted, and he would most please God when he was dishonoured.

Wisdom, i. e. Christ, justifies her children in the sight of her adversaries, they should therefore justify wisdom in the sight of her enemies. Christ would have his people bear witness by their profession and practice against the sins of the times, as well as he will judge and condemn the world at last with them by their approbation. Thus Joseph of Arimathea would go boldly to Pilate to beg the body of Jesus, though the malice of the age had risen so high as to put him to death, when he was never mentioned in scripture till that action. Sinful times increase the

wickedness of the wicked, but strengthen the graces of the godly; for they make them more watchful, and watchfulness makes them the more practical. We then declare ourselves most the friends of Christ, when we own him among a multitude of enemies. Opposition makes God take notice of our obedience in a special manner. Probably Judas's repining at Mary's kindness in anointing Christ, was the occasion that the scent of that ointment was spread about the world.

(2.) In *suffering times.* In suffering times from God, as in desertion. Christ's obedience was eminent, he would obey God when God had forsaken him. A true disciple is not like Saul, impatient to wait upon God, when he hides his face, and run to a witch for counsel. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, Job* 13. 15. To obey Christ when he manifests his love, is obedience to ourselves; to obey him when he veils himself, is pure love and obedience to him.

In suffering times from *men.* Many would be obedient to their advantage, but to be *obedient to death* is the property of a true disciple, *Rev.* 3. 21, as it was of his Master, *Phil.* 2. 8. Misery makes men oftener forget their virtues, than their vices. Many are like the Jews, to cry Hosanna when Christ rides in triumph, and presently after when he is condemned, either fly from him, or vote against him, like snakes that come out of their holes in a hot day to sun themselves, and at night retreat to sculk in their caverns. Many come to live by Christ, but not die for him. Shame, mocks, scoffing did not hinder Christ from dying for us; why should shame and reproaches hinder us from dying for Christ? The apostle speaks of cleaving to that which is good, *Rom.* 12. 9, κολλωμενοι, things glued are not easily separated: we should cleave so close to him that nothing should part us from him. Wind will not blow off a snail or any other glutinous substance from a tree.

Well then, constancy is an ingredient in the obedience Christ requires. His *trees bring forth fruit in old age*, *Psal.* 92. 14. Age makes other things decay, but makes a christian flourish. Some are like hot horses, mettlesome at the beginning of a journey, and tired a long time before they come to their journey's end. A good disciple as he would not have from God a temporary happiness, so he would not give to God a temporary obedience; as he would have his glory last as long as God lives, so he would have his obedience last as long as he lives. Judas had a fair beginning, but destroyed all in the end by betraying his Master.

2. The *subject* of this doing, *ye*, it must be the whole man. Not do with a part of yourselves, but your whole selves; there must be a resignation of the whole soul to God. The tables of the law were written on both sides, *Exod.* 32. 15, 16, so must obedience be upon every faculty. Ahab, Herod, and the stony ground were partial in their obedience, like *Ephraim, a cake not turned*, *Hos.* 7. 8, baked on one side and dough on the other. Intus Nero, foras Cato, saith Hicrom; but our obedience to Christ must answer our former enmity: as that was spread over the whole soul, so must this. There must be an enlightened understanding, flexible will, tender conscience, regulated affections, watchful members to go upon the errands of God. As the Father said to the prodigal, *all that I have is thine*, so must the soul to Christ, Lord, all that I have is thine, understanding, will, affections, &c. The holocausts among the Israelites were wholly burnt; so are we wholly to sacrifice ourselves.

3. The *object*. *Whatsoever* ὅσα as many things as *I command you*. Not think it enough to perform one or two, but every one, whatsoever; *And so he taught the apostles to teach others*, *Matt.* 28. 20. Christ performed every command of his Father, and we must perform every command of Christ. He is not

a man after God's own heart that doth not *fulfil all his will*, it is David's commendation that he did so, *Acts* 13. 22. Josiah hath the same character left upon record, both for the universality of the subject, and the universality of the object; *He turned to the Lord with all his soul, according to all the law of Moses*, 2 *Kings* 23. 35. An habitual disposition there must be, that must pass into act, where a particular command, and an opportunity of observing it, meet together. No command but is so good, so just, so holy, that it deserves our compliance with it in the highest pitch, and when we cannot equal it, we are to bewail our defects. Obedience is quite out of tune if any one command be slighted: the lute is incapable of making music if one string, the treble, be broken. When the people went to gather manna on the sabbath, and so broke the law, God taxes them with a violation of the whole, *Exod.* 16. 27, 28. To neglect any one command is disingenuous. Would we have all our sins pardoned, and shall we not be willing to have all God's commands performed? It is also dangerous. If a man be to go ten miles, and only go nine of them, he had as good never have set out, he will never come to his journey's end.

(1.) Whatsoever I command you in the true *meaning and design of it.* Not like the Pharisees, who though they do not blot out the law, yet enervate it by false glosses and interpretations, and so make it insignificant, taking away the life and soul of a command.

(2.) Whatsoever I command you, though it may seem *mean and low* in the eyes of men. As Christ did not think any thing too low to do for us, we must not think any thing too mean to do for him. Whatsoever is accounted vile that is for the honour of Christ, we should endeavour to be more vile in it. We have David's vote for it, that it was *better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* The least duty must be per-

formed; art shows itself most in little works, so doth grace its excellency in the performance of the least commands. *Natura triumphat in minimis*, a fly shows God's power as well as the world. The least mite in sincerity is acceptable to God, as well as the greatest hecatomb, or a sacrifice of the beasts upon a thousand hills. The least command should be as dear to a gracious soul as the greatest. We are not to wave the greatest because of its difficulty, nor despise the least because of its littleness. A jewel is not accounted vile because it is little, nor should a command because it is mean. He that breaks the least command shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.

4. The *person* commanding: *Whatsoever I command you.* * The authority of Christ must be eyed in all obedience, and his command be made the rule. When we do the matter of the law, without an eye to the authority that enacts, it is an obedience to the law, but not the lawgiver. Men may perform the matter of a law, yet despise the authority of the lawgiver in their hearts. We are not so much to consider, saith *Hierom, imperii quantitatem,* as *imperantis dignitatem.* We are not only to observe Christ as a friend, but obey him as a sovereign. He that is the king's friend must not forget that he is also the king's subject. What he doth as a friend in a way of kindness, he must perform also as a subject in a way of duty. We must glorify Christ as Christ, i. e. in all the relations wherein he stands to us. Now he is not only our Saviour but our King, and we are not only his friends, but his servants. What we receive from God should be received as from him; *Ye received the word as the word of God,* 1 *Thess.* 2. 13. What we do to God should be done as to him, suitable to his divine greatness and majesty. Obedience must be performed because Christ commands, and as Christ commands it.

Use 1. It informs us of the *excellency* of the chris-

* Εγω emphatically added.

tian religion. It demands the greatest purity, and confers the greatest privilege. It brings us to the rule of God, and invests us with the friendship of our creator. No religion hath so much of benefit, and so much of duty. Nothing enforceth such exactness in the ways of God. Nothing bestows so much of happiness upon the creature. In other religions something is indulged to gain proselytes, and carnal rewards are proposed to invite them. The precepts of this are holy and the rewards high: other religions consist in negatives, this in positives. The gospel discovers more sin, and exacts more holiness. It affords us matter of love, not fear, for our principle: not force to constrain, but grace to persuade. Gospel obedience is not the fruit of bondage, but the fruit of love and friendship.

2. Obedience is our *privilege* as well as our duty. It admits us into the friendship of Christ.* The bitterest duty is sugared with this unspeakable comfort. Those that stand idle in the market-place, meet with no such reward. It is no small honour to be a king's friend; how inconceivable is the honour to be a friend of Christ? *In keeping his commands there is great reward.* This is a reward above the highest descent. Enoch was descended but the seventh from Adam, yet this was not his honour, but his walking with God. To be a friend of Christ in rags, is a greater honour than to be king of the whole world in purple robes. Hierom, speaking of a Roman senator, saith, he was noble, not because consularis but christianus. The very act of an holy obedience gives a sweeter reflection than all the pleasures of the world. Christ indeed calls the gospel a yoke, but an easy one: he calls it a yoke, as natural men think it, not as gracious men find it, for it is a privilege more than a yoke. Christ discovers the glory of his love in the heart, as God did the glory of his presence in the temple.

* Imperium Dei beneficium est Hierom.

3. How *inexcusable* are disobedient professors? The greater the honour proposed as an invitation, the greater the sin in refusing the terms upon which that honour may be enjoyed. It had been worth the enduring the torments of some thousands of years, to come at last to the privilege of being the friends of Christ. But no such thing is required, it is not parting with the first-born of our bodies, or searching out thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, it is not suffering the flames of hell for a finite multitude of years, no impossible or rigid penances are enjoined, only *do whatsoever I command you*, and his *commands are not grievous* in the experience of those that have tried them, 1 *John* 5. 3. What an unreasonable thing is it, not to part with vile earth for gold, with rags for robes, with misery for happiness, with hell for heaven, with sin for Christ? He that would refuse to be a prince's favourite upon the performance of an easy task, deserves without pity to be spurned out of the court; and what excuse can that person have, that will not exchange the slavery of the devil for the friendship of the Redeemer? Can any blame Christ at last, for refusing any relation to them, and bidding them depart from him, when they here refused his friendship, and would have nothing to do with him?

4. How much *comfort and encouragement* may be drawn from hence under all reproaches? Who would regard the barking of dogs in the doing of that which hath an excellent honour entailed upon it? The devil regards not the opinions men have of him; he looks not upon their curses as his loss, because he is of an higher nature; he pursues his business: Shall a diabolical nature slight that which a divine nature shall not surmount? Shall not curses here, and torments at the end, discourage him from venting his malice against God, and prosecuting his devilish designs; and shall reproaches discourage any from that obedience which is attended with so great an

honour? What is it to be reproached and scorned here a little time, while the favour of God is enjoyed, and after a few nights' sleep we are to be raised out of the dust to glory, to enjoy his friendship for ever, and to be in glory where he is? This would be a support when the bullets fly fast about our ears. It is impossible to be faint-hearted with lively thoughts of so great an honour: weigh seriously this honour, and then weigh the obstructions, and see whether the latter be not overbalanced by the former. Would a glorified saint incarnate again in the world, decline the practice of obedience upon such a high encouragement, because of reproaches? Men might as soon persuade him to endure the torments of hell, as to part with so great an honour upon so light an opposition. The rolling of a black cloud over a traveller's head, will not cause him to break off a necessary journey to court, to become the king's friend, or his son-in-law.

5. What an *incentive* have we then to an exact obedience? This is the delight of Christ, and so high a delight to him, that he thinks fit to reward it with no less than a special friendship. Christ looked upon the young man's morality with an eye of love, much more will he upon an evangelical obedience. It is not the pomp of the world, or the glittering vanities man's heart runs after, that can lay any claim to this dignity. Obedience though low, if sincere, is the delight of Christ. He loves to go into the vineyard and look upon the tender grapes, as well as upon the *ripe fruit*, *Cant.* 7. 12, and 8. 2. It is by this you show yourselves the friends of Christ; by this you maintain his honour in the world; this is a silent conviction upon others, and makes them have some veneration for religion. Men judge usually of principles by practices, and you never heard any speak against the principles of religion, but they first fell upon the practice of the professors of it. It is by this obedience we *glorify God and Christ*, *Matt.* 5.

16, i. e. make others speak well of the ways of religion: let this honour of being the friends of Christ, engage us to obedience as the means. It is a shame for such that may attain such a privilege, to pursue any thing lower. An Alexander watches for kingdoms: it is a poor spirited Domitian that loves to catch flies. How many will conform to men's principles, to their will for a small reward, yea, for no reward; and shall not we conform to our Redeemer's will for so glorious a title? We must first be Jacobs, supplanters of vice, before we be Israels, seers of God.

Let us close all with a few directions.

1. Let us walk as those that have *the eye of Christ upon us*, to see whether we act as friends to him or no. Let us consider in every action, that it is registered by conscience, laid up in Christ's remembrance, and will be censured by him either as the act of a friend or an enemy. Men look upon the bark of the action, this may appear fair, and have a gloss upon it; Christ looks upon the inward part, upon the spirit, to see how the heart is conformed to the command: we may hide our deformities from men, but not from an all-seeing eye. Now I am going to this or that action; I have a watchful eye over me, that pierceth into all my thoughts, discovers the principles whereby I am conducted, the end for which I move, and sees how my heart answers the command.

2. Let us walk as though every action were *an inlet to the favour or enmity of Christ.* What know I, but this action may open a door to the favour of Christ, or his endless refusal? What do I know, but at the end of this I may either be in Abraham's bosom, or in the gulf of misery, and launch into a blessed or miserable eternity!

3. Let us walk as though *the glory of Christ depended upon every action.* If our credit, estates, relations, worldy advantages depend upon one action, how careful and diligent should we be in the doing of

it? Let us act as though the honour of Christ, and our relation to him, depended upon what we go about.

4. Let us walk as if we were to give *an account immediately* of what we have done. Let us set before us Christ's tribunal, and imagine ourselves called to judgment: I am going about a business, but if Christ should send for me at the end of it, what account can I give him of my friendship and obedience to him in it? Is this such an action, that when I look Christ in the face, I can challenge him upon this promise to own me as a friend?

5. Let us walk as though *Christ stood before us crucified* with all the obligations of love on his part; as if we saw him with his wounds open, and love and blood distilling from his heart upon us, and consider whether the act we are going about be suited to such inestimable kindness, or putting him to an open shame. Hath not Christ had wounds enough, but must I increase them? Hath not he had misery enough, but must I add more? Shall I break his heart who breathes kindness towards me, and behave myself as an enemy towards him who offers me a favour which cannot be merited by a creature? Shall I wound him whose heart is open for me, and strike him that wooes me? Shall I be a Judas to him that would be my friend, and pull him down that would lift me up to the highest privilege of a creature?

6. Let us walk as we think a *damned soul would walk*, if he were again to live under the knowledge of such a promise. How would he obey, and obey heartily? How would he pray, and pray fervently? How busy might we suppose him to be in inquiring what those commands were, and how diligent in the performance of them? How would he by violence take all opportunities to pursue his duty, and attain his privilege? What, if any should see a damned soul stand before him when he was going to commit any act of uncleanness, and tell him it was for less

than this he was judged an enemy to Christ, and a miserable wretch for ever? Would any man's fear suffer him to go on in his intended evil? We have not those objects of fear before our eyes, but we have this promise in the world suited more to ingenuous natures; to be counted the friends of God and Christ, *if we do whatsoever he commands us.*

AFFLICTIONS.

Heb. 12. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

AND YE HAVE FORGOTTEN THE EXHORTATION, WHICH SPEAKETH UNTO YOU, AS UNTO CHILDREN, MY SON, DESPISE NOT THOU THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN THOU ART REBUKED OF HIM. FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVETH HE CHASTENETH, AND SCOURGETH EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVETH. IF YE ENDURE CHASTENING, GOD DEALETH WITH YOU AS WITH SONS: FOR WHAT SON IS HE WHOM THE FATHER CHASTENETH NOT? BUT IF YE BE WITHOUT CHASTISEMENT, WHEREOF ALL ARE PARTAKERS, THEN ARE YE BASTARDS, AND NOT SONS. FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE HAD FATHERS OF OUR FLESH, WHICH CORRECTED US, AND WE GAVE THEM REVERENCE; SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER BE IN SUBJECTION TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE? FOR THEY VERILY FOR A FEW DAYS CHASTENED US AFTER THEIR OWN PLEASURE, BUT HE FOR OUR PROFIT, THAT WE MIGHT BE PARTAKERS OF HIS HOLINESS. NOW NO CHASTENING FOR THE PRESENT SEEMETH TO BE JOYOUS, BUT GRIEVOUS: NEVERTHELESS, AFTERWARD IT YIELDETH THE PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO THEM WHICH ARE EXERCISED THEREBY.

THE AFFLICTIONS OF BELIEVERS.

The scope of the apostle's design—We must not slight afflictions, or be dejected under them—All from the hand of God—This should check impatience—Should teach us to have recourse to him—Shews his tenderness towards his children in their afflictions—Their afflictions the effects of divine love—Prosperity no

evidence of his love—No believer free from sin—Therefore all are under correction—They who are strangers to discipline are not children of God—The glorious state of the true believer—The advantages of God's discipline—Earthly parents chastise for their own pleasure—Their common mistakes—Afflictions not always punishments—The children of God should love him for their afflictions—All afflictions grievous to nature—But productive of the greatest good—We should therefore make a right estimate of them—And exercise faith and patience under them.

THE apostle, after having drawn a catalogue of those illustrious souls that had manifested a choice faith upon several occasions, descends in this chapter to press the believing Hebrews to an exercise of patience and faith under those pressures they should meet with in their christian course; Where he proposeth first to them, the *example of Christ*, ver. 2, 3. Next, the exhortation of the Holy Ghost, drawn from *Prov.* 3. 11, 12. *My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord: neither be weary of his correction. For whom the Lord loveth he corrects, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth:* which being an instruction concerning the nature and use of afflictions God sends upon us, the apostle applies to the particular case of the Hebrews; but discourseth in general of the author, subjects, and ends of the afflictions God exerciseth his children with: *Have you forgotten the exhortation, which speaks to you as to children?* Have you lost the remembrance of what God says in that exhortation by his wisdom? *Prov.* 3; where he commends his goodness, and shows the obligation you have to listen to him, by vouchsafing you the name of children; the greatest glory and the highest

comfort of a creature; have you, saith he, forgot this? Have you not the intent of it in your mind and memories, in your hearts and considerations?

The apostle discourses here of the necessity and advantages of afflictions. In ver. 5, he orders us not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor to despond under it; *faint not when thou art rebuked of him;* this he backs with many motives in the following verses. Μὴ ὀλιγωρει, do not make a light account of afflictions.

One motive is in the word *chastening*, παιδεια, which signifies the instruction whereby a child is brought to the knowledge of things profitable for him; which seeing it is not effected in that age, subject to extravagancy, without stripes as well as words, the word is therefore used for the discipline which attends such instruction. Another motive is from the *author* of afflictions, the *Lord*, despise not the chastening of the Lord.

Observations.

1. It must be our great care not to slight afflictions, nor to be too much *dejected under them.* The smart will keep us from despising an affliction in itself, but we make light of it. when we are careless of improving it for the ends for which God inflicts it; we may be sensible of the pain, when we are not sensible of the profit, which may accrue to us by it; God forbids here two extremities, the one an excess, the other a want of courage. Both dishonour God, the one in his sovereignty, the other in his goodness and love: and both are injurious to the sufferer, as he rebels against the one, and loseth the sweetness of the other. We should receive the afflictions God sends, with a humility without despondency, with a reverence without distrust, and keep ourselves from either fearing too much, or not fearing God enough; mix reverence with confidence, adore the hand which we feel, and rest in the

goodness which he promiseth; this is the way to reap the fruit of afflictions.

2. All afflictions, let them be from what immediate causes soever, are from the hand of God. Whether they come from man, as loss of goods, or other calamities, whether they be sicknesses, griefs, &c. they are all dispensed by the order of God, for one and the same design, viz. our instruction. Human reason doth not believe this, some think they come by chance, or look only to second causes, and regard them not as wholesome instructions from God, and the orders of his providence.

1. This should stop any *impatient* motions. It is fit we should be of the Psalmist's temper, hold our peace, *because God hath done it*, *Psal.* 39. 9. Shall the clay formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou thus? We should rather say as Eli, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 *Sam.* 3. 18; especially since an infinite wisdom is joined with the sovereign authority of God; and when we are not able to understand the reason of his conduct, we ought to acquiesce in his will and in his wisdom, and stop the motion of any passions, by a humiliation under his hand.

2. It teacheth us *to whom* to have recourse. That hand that strikes, can only cease striking. When David had stilled impatience, he awakens his prayer, *Remove thy strokes from me, I am consumed with the blows of thine hand*, *Psal.* 39. 10. If Shimei casts a stone at David, it is the Lord that bid him; if the humours of our bodies rise against us, it is God that arms them, and it is he must be sought to for redress. He only can disband what force he raises. It is our comfort there is a sovereign power, to whom we can make our moan, in our addresses, and that our sovereign that struck us is ready to heal us.

3. How great is the *tenderness* of God towards his children groaning under any affliction! My son des-

pise not, &c. He calls them his sons, his children, sweetening in the name, whatsoever is rigorous in the suffering. He gives them a title whereby he manifests, that he doth share in their grief, hath a resentment of their trouble. What father is there on earth, unless he hath lost all natural affection, who doth not sympathize in the suffering of his children? All the compassions of men combined, are not to be compared to the tenderness and love of God. Afflictions are not always sent by God in anger with his creatures, but sent by God as a father.

Hence it is easy to conceive, that neither the intentions of God, nor the issue of a suffering, can be any other than happy to those that are the *children of God*, since he gives the name of child, and son, to every one that he doth instruct as a Father by correction. And this will teach us to have a sense of the sufferings of others. The argument to press this exhortation, is taken from the impulsive cause, the love of God; and the word translated chasten, signifies such a chastisement as a father gives his son, or a master his scholar. Here observe,

First. 1. The afflictions of believers are *effects of divine love. For whom the Lord loves he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,* Rev. 3. 19. they are not acts of divine revenge, whereby God would satisfy his justice, but of divine affection, whereby he communicates his goodness, and draws the image of his Son with more beauty and glory. They are the acts of God, but not of a sleepy and careless God, but a wise and indulgent Father, who takes all the care, both of instruction and correction, to train you up to his will and likeness. God indeed afflicts other men who are not in the number of his beloved children; there are scarce any among the sons of men that pass their life in a continual prosperity, exempt from all kind of affliction; and all these evils are from God as the governor of the world, yet though there be no

difference between the sufferings of one and the other, and though the sufferings of believers are often more sharp than those of carnal men, in outward appearance; yet there is a vast difference in the motives of them; love makes him strike the believer, and fury makes him strike the unregenerate man. The design of the correction of the one, is their profit, not their ruin, the strokes upon the other are often the first fruits of eternal punishment.

1. Then the world is *much mistaken*, in judging the afflictions of believers to be testimonies of God's anger and hatred. God acts towards the world as a law giver and judge, but towards those that he hath renewed and adopted, in the quality of a Father; and who would judge of the hatred of a tender father by the corrections he inflicts upon a child that is so dear to him? Believers suffer by God not simply as he is a judge, but as he is *Paternus Judex*, there is a combination of judge and father. God doth not intend revenge on them; for though they are afflicted for sin, yet the principal aim is to prove them, reform them, that they may be worthy of a blessed inheritance. *Lazarus whom thou lovest is sick*, was the speech of his sister to Christ. They were fearing, thinking that Christ's love was departed with Lazarus's health.

2. No man hath then any reason to fancy himself the object of God's love, *for outward prosperity. No man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him, Eccl.* 9. 1. God does not always love those whom his providence preserves in health and ease. Such a conceit proceeds from an ignorance of another life, and too great a valuation of the things of this world. Temporal goods, credit in the world, outward conveniencies, and an uninterrupted health, are effects of God's patience and common goodness, but not of his affection and choicest love. They are the marks of his affection, when by his grace they are made means to conduct us to a better inheritance; but how often are they pernicious to us by

reason of our corruption and ill usage of them? How often doth the health of the body destroy that of the soul; and the prosperity of the flesh ruin that of the spirit? How often do riches and honours link our hearts to the earth, and expel any thoughts of an heavenly Paradise? How often doth a portion in this world make many slack their endeavours for a portion in heaven? How often do they hinder our sanctification, which is the only means to an happy vision of God?

3. How should this move us in our afflictions, to a carriage pleasing to God? This is the motive the apostle uses to press his exhortation in the former verse, neither to despise the chastening of God, nor despond of his care. Why should we despise that which is dispensed by love? Who would not be willing to satisfy a friend in his desire, which they are assured love is the motive of, though their prudence is not so exact, as that we can absolutely trust it? Should we not with greater care consider the chastisements which the love of God, both good and wise, does ordain by providence? Is not the love, the motive of suffering, a sufficient ground to prevent distrust and discouragement? Why should any distrust him by whom he knows he is afflicted? That correction which frights us, is a work of his love, not of his hatred. Should we not therefore wait with faith for an happy issue of that chastisement which we suffer? If we be once thus affected, we shall receive afflictions with a temper answerable to God, and improve them for those holy ends for which God sends them. We should also bear them patiently, since they are not for the reparation of the holiness of the law, and the satisfaction of his justice, but to prove the soul and fit it for heaven. It is not the love of the criminal, but the love of the laws, which causes a judge to condemn and punish him. No wise man ever said, that a prince did punish malefactors because he loved them; or that God makes the wicked suffer

eternal punishment in hell, because he loves them. It necessarily follows, that therefore the chastisements God doth inflict, are not properly punishments of the same nature with those God doth ordain for unbelievers. We have reason therefore to bear them with patience. It is inexcusable to murmur at an act of love. Use then a religious reason in the consideration of this. When the Father scourgeth, the child cries, and then he thinks the father hates him; it is but the error of his childhood; and when he comes to reason he will regard it as a false opinion. When a physician hath lanced you, and given you a bitter potion, you never had any suspicion that he hated you; you have received all his charitable offices, and thought him more worthy of a reward than a rebuke: why should not our carriage be so to God?

Second observation. No righteous man in the world *is, or ever was,* free from sin. *He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Sin is the cause of afflictions; were we free from sin, we should be free from scourges. Afflictions cease not till sin be quite destroyed, which will not be in this world. Justice finds enough in every believer in the world to punish, and mercy finds enough to pardon.

1. It is against this then, that we should turn our aim. What Satan would make us vent in impatience against God, let us manifest in a hatred of that which is the true cause of all the evils which in general or particular we suffer. Let us strike that, as much as God strikes us; and it is but grateful reason, since it is the best way whereby we can show our love to God, who in his strokes upon us shows his love to us. Let us take no rest till we have put that to death which God only hates; it is the death of sin, and not the death of the soul, God designs in afflictions.

2. It is, upon this account, an argument for patience. While our disease remains, why should we think ill of the physician for using means for a cure? If he did not use the means, though sharp, we then

should have most reason to accuse him of a want of pity. What father would not be counted very tender, that should lance his child himself when he saw there was need for it? Sin puts God upon a necessity of scourging; his goodness and wisdom will not suffer him to do any thing but what is necessary and expedient. Now, ver. 7, the apostle exhorts them to a patient bearing the hand of God, because he deals with them as a father with his sons, in a way of reward afterwards; as parents caress those children they see quiet after punishment; *If ye endure chastening, God deals with you as sons.* God προφέρεται, offers himself to you as a father to his sons. Or rather the apostle doth render the comfort in the former verse more efficacious to the Hebrews; and makes application of what is contained in that truth which he had cited out of the Proverbs, in the former verse: that yet, if they endure chastisement, God treats them as children; and being men, are apt to think that a troublesome affliction is inconsistent with the love of God; the apostle contradicts such a thought, by the question, *What son is there whom the Father chasteneth not?* And he goes further, ver. 8, and draws another conclusion, that we should be so far from thinking, that to be afflicted is a sign of our not being the children of God, that on the contrary he affirms, that *not to be chastised* is a sign that a man is not of God's family; *If you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons,* ver. 8. For if the Lord scourgeth every son whom he receives, it is clear, that he whom he leaves without chastisement, is not a true and legitimate son, but a stranger, a *bastard;* i. e. one that is not of the family, but takes only the name and quality, without any right to it.

Third observation.

God, in chastening believers, treats them as *children.* If here is as much as when; *If you endure chastening,* i. e. when you endure chastening; as *If*

you offer a sacrifice of peace offering, *Lev.* 19. 5; i. e. when you offer a sacrifice. So, *If I go and prepare a place for you, John* 14. 3, i. e. when I go and prepare a place for you. Since God hath commanded men expressly in his word, to chastise their children, and hath engraved such a disposition in the hearts of mankind, and authorized such a carriage by his law, we must not think it strange, that God, who is wisdom, goodness, and love, should exercise in his family such a just, and holy, and wholesome discipline. And as none can say, that a tender father, when he chastiseth his child, deals with him as with an enemy; so none can affirm the same of God. And though affliction be an evil in itself, and sharp to the child that suffers it, yet if you compare it with the good it procures, it is not an evil, but an experienced good. Compare the lives of those children that have not been without the correction of their parents or strangers, to the lives of those that have been left to themselves without it, and the advantages of the one, and miseries of the other, will easily appear. *A wise son hears the instruction of his father, Prov.* 13. 1. *Hear* is not in the Hebrew. A wise son is the instruction or chastisement of his father.

The Jews have a proverb, If you see a wise child, be sure that the father hath chastised him.* God deals in this manner with his children, and there is need of it; for though the regenerate are freed from the slavery of sin, yet while they are clothed with flesh, the flesh will lust against the spirit, and God not only chastises us for our infirmities, but to prevent them. And since the love which he bears us, and the salvation, which he procures by his chastisements, doth infinitely surpass the affections of the best and tenderest fathers, and the best fruit we can draw from their discipline; we may well confess, that no father in the world can be said to deal as a father with his

* Drusius.

children, so as God doth with the believer. He offers himself to do a father's office. He is the world's sovereign; but a believer's father: as he is the governor of the world, he treats men righteously in his judgments; as he is the Father of believers, he treats them graciously in his afflictions.

Here is a *great comfort.* If God deal with you as with children in his striking of you. His wisdom and his goodness is infinite, he doth nothing but what is just and reasonable, and is guided by a fatherly affection in all that he doth; his blows are healthful. If David would account it *a kindness if the righteous would smite him,* and count his rebukes as an excellent oil, *Psal.* 141. 5, how much more ought we to have the same sentiments of the chastisement of God? Good men may mistake in their rebukes, God cannot; he is too wise to be deceived, and too good not to make even his strokes become an excellent balsam. He doth not assault us as enemies, nor only as criminals, but as children; not to punish us in his fury, but to refine us; to make us fit for him to take pleasure in; to make us more like him in the frame and temper of our souls. This is the end of a tender father's chastising his children, and this is the end of God. We should receive his corrections therefore, not so much as a punishment as a favour, since he strikes not as an enemy to destroy, but as a father to correct; not only as a God of righteousness, but as a God of tenderness.

Fourth Observation. No child of God but is *one time or other* under his correcting hand. The apostle makes a challenge to all, to show one in that relation privileged from it; *What son is there whom the father chasteneth not?* None of those mentioned among the believing Hebrews in the foregoing chapter were without the smart. Noah had an affliction in a child, *Gen.* 12. 10. Abraham and Jacob were afflicted with famine, Isaac by an Esau, Moses fain to fly for his life, Job suffered the loss of his goods,

Hezekiah a dangerous sickness. To be under afflictions then is to travel in the road of all that have gone before. And the apostle goes further, ver. 8, and affirms, that not to be chastised, is a certain sign of no right to a membership of his family; *But if you be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons.* This is an argument from the antithesis, they are *bastards*, and not *sons*, who are not corrected. Bastards, not, saith Grotius, those whom the father of the family hath begot, but those that an adulterous mother would obtrude upon him as parts of his family, which he rejects from any paternal care of instruction and discipline, as having no part in his inheritance, no right to his goods, not born of his seed which is the word. By this the apostle signifies,

1. That *all the true children* of God are under his discipline. If they are not, they are no parts of his family. He that is left without it, is not in the number of those he owns for his children. Hereby he strengthens what he had spoken before, that God deals with those he afflicts as children; whence it follows, that there is no child of his, but he doth one time or another afflict. This is one of the clauses of the covenant God hath made with us in Jesus, which he doth peculiarly insert, when he owns himself *our God* and *Father*, *he would visit them with a rod*, but *not take away his loving kindness*, *Psa.* 89. 32. In the new testament, God promiseth spiritual blessings. In the old when he promised most temporal blessings, his people were not exempt from his discipline. In the new testament it is more express, that *through afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven;* his only Son must suffer and so enter into glory.

2. That those that are not under his discipline, *are not his children.* Afflictions therefore are so far from being discouragements, that where there is an evidence of grace in the heart, they are rather marks of

adoption. We might well doubt of a relation to him, if he took no care of us; that we were not his sheep, if he used not his crook to pull us unto him. Let us then receive his chastisements without regret, since he manifests his care of us in them, and regards us with the eyes and heart of a Father. If we were wholly strangers, he would abandon us, and leave us as persons he knew not. His paternal rod is for his children, his rod of iron for his enemies.

But now in the ninth and following verses, the apostle exhorts them to a reverence of God under his chastising hand; the argument is a *minori ad majus. Furthermore we have had fathers of the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?* ver. 9. And he urges the exhortation, (1.) *From the right of God.* He is the Father of Spirits. (2.) From his intention, which is our spiritual profit, ver. 10. (3.) From the issue; it is as much our advantage in the event, as it was in his intention, ver. 11. The fathers of our flesh have corrected us, and we gave them reverence, how much rather ought we to be subject to the Father of spirits, who chasteneth us that we may live?

The two persons which the apostle compares together, viz. God and man, have this in common, one and the other is a father, one and the other chasteneth, one and the other is carried out to it by love, one and the other designs advantage; but as there is this resemblance, so there is a great difference; *man* is but the *father of the body*, the more ignoble part of our nature, that which we have common with beasts. God is the *Father of our spirits*, the more noble part, and that which makes us properly men; more submission is therefore due to him, who confers more upon us, than to them who confer less. The love which fathers bear to their children is a passion, and many times is not regulated by reason; but the love of God is a true love, not mingled with any im-

perfection either of excess or defect, and therefore doth nothing but with the justest reason. Again, earthly fathers aim at the good of their children, but their ignorance is so great that often they mistake it; but the knowledge of God is as perfect as his love, who always chastiseth his people for their true good, and therefore a greater submission is due to him.

(1.) How *glorious* is the condition of a true believer! he is the *child of God; What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!* 1 *John* 3. 1. It is an argument of great love, to give his people so honourable and dear a title, to call himself their Father, as well as their God. It is not so strange that he should call all the pure spirits in heaven his children, as he should call those that have defiled his image by that title; that he should own himself a father to them that are by nature children of wrath, slaves to Satan, sold under sin, that have nothing in them to please him by nature, but are fit objects of his wrath and curse: wonderful love, that God should not think it a dishonour to him to be called our father! And hence it is reason we should carry ourselves to him in all his dispensations as children to a father; that we should comfort ourselves in this relation in all the sufferings we encounter. If he be our Father, what should we fear? Nothing passes in the world without his order, no evil arrives to us without his will, every affliction is the rod of his hand; the very thought that God is our Father, should sweeten any grief.

(2.) God is the *Creator of souls.* By spirits are meant the souls of men; some understand it also of spiritual gifts; the graces God infuseth into the souls of his people; both are good motives to that submission unto, and reverence of God, the apostle urgeth. Most interpreters run the first way; the antithesis requires, that we should understand by this expression that God is the Creator of souls, because it is opposed

to the *fathers of the flesh.* God is called *the God of the spirits of all flesh, Numb.* 16. 22. As by the flesh the apostle means the body, the material and visible part of our natures, so by the Spirit he means the soul, the spiritual and invisible part of our being. As for the body, man engendered it, as for the soul, God only formed it, as in *Eccles.* 12. 7; *Then shall the dust return to the earth, and the Spirit shall return to God that gave it.* Where by the dust is meant the body, and by the Spirit, the soul. The body was formed of the *dust of the ground, Gen.* 2. 7; but the soul was breathed in by God. It is the Spirit that gives life and sense to the parts of the body, which otherwise are without sense and motion; and God is said to *form the spirit of man, Zech.* 12. 1, and challengeth to himself the particular forming of the soul, *the soul which I have made, Isa.* 57. 16.

God indeed forms the body too by the hand of nature, by the intervention of second causes, which he employs, but the *soul he forms without any other cause,* but his own will. The first manner of acting by nature in the production of the body, is not sufficient to demonstrate God the Father of it, no more than he can be called the Father of beasts and plants, which are produced by his powerful providence, as well as the bodies of men; but the second manner of acting in the production of an immortal and spiritual substance is sufficient to demonstrate God the Father of Spirits; as they also are called the children of God, because God immediately created them, and cloathed them with an immortal nature. The apostle therefore hath good reason to call men which have begot us, the fathers of the flesh, because, though the wisdom and power of God in his providence, acts in our conception and generation, yet it is also the work of man, who acts as a second cause; but the production of the soul is purely by

the will and power of God without the action of any creature. Hence it follows that the soul is immortal, for since it doth not depend in its original upon matter, it doth not in its subsistence, neither after death hath separated the body from it. It follows also, that the reasonable soul is more excellent than the bodies which we receive from earthly fathers, and therefore we owe more submission and reverence to God and his chastisements, than to those who have been only the fathers of our bodies, which the interrogation intimates, *shall we not much rather be in subjection to the father of spirits and live?*

And live, or that *we may live;* this is an argument from the reward of a patient suffering. The apostle seems tacitly to refer to the promise of life to children that honour their parents; as a temporal life was promised to them, so a spiritual and eternal life is promised to those that are patiently obedient under the hand of God. As in Israel, those that slighted the rebukes of their parents were stoned without pity, so will God handle those that kick against his discipline, and make no profit of his rod. Corrections cause life, not meritoriously, but instrumentally. If we therefore own God as a Father, we ought to carry ourselves to him as our Father. If we desire an happy and eternal life, we must subject ourselves to his hand, acknowledge the righteousness of his discipline, and by how much the paternity of God is more excellent, our submission ought to be the more reverential. In ver. 10, the apostle urges the exhortation further, from the manner of God's proceedings with us different from that of earthly fathers, and from his aim in it; *for they for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* This he doth by comparing of the heavenly Father, and the earthly father with one another, and acquaints

us, that it is the aim of God, in those afflictions which seem most bitter, to reduce us to that holiness which we have lost in Adam.

1. They verily for a *few days chastened us;* either death deprives them of their authority, or the growth of their children exempts them from suffering under it. Parents only take care to correct their children during the weakness of their childhood, when by ignorance and inexperience they are incapable to conduct themselves; they have therefore need of their parents to form their spirits, and make those impressions upon them, whereby they may govern themselves the rest of their lives. But when they are arrived to years of discretion, they are left to govern themselves according to their own reason, without using the rod to supply the defect of their understanding; so that the corrections of earthly parents are but for few years, a little time.

Hereby appears the *advantage* of God's discipline above that of earthly parents. God continues his care to us all our lives upon the earth, as long as we have need, exercises a greater providence over us, than earthly parents over their children.

And hereby the apostle *comforts us.* It is but a little time that God subjects us to chastisements, only that part of our life which we are to pass on earth, which is but a small time to that eternity wherein we shall be exempt from suffering, bears infinitely less proportion to eternity, than the least instant doth to all the time from the creation to the end of the world, so that the time of a believer's chastisement is shorter than that of children under their parents. And herein is the kindness and love of God apparent, who deals more favourably with his children, in regard of the time of their correction, than the best father in the world can do.

2. The motive of, and rule that parents too often follow in their chastising their children *after their own pleasure.* They have often a greater regard to

their own passions, than their children's advantage, correct oftener in humour than with reason; having no other law but their own will, their judgment is apt to be deceived, whereby it happens that their corrections often injure their children, instead of advantaging them, whatsoever their intention may be; and that either by mistake of the nature of things for which they chastise them, or the indiscreet measure and manner of their chastening.

(1.) Mistaking the *nature* of the things for which they chastise their children. Fathers endeavour to form their children to that which they judge best and most profitable for them in this life; but their judgments are often mistaken; as a covetous parent that acknowledges no other happiness than wealth, will instil such instructions into his child, to think nothing unjust that is profitable and enriching; an ambitious man will endeavour to imprint the sentiments of worldly honour upon his children; a superstitious parent will correct his child for not conforming himself to that mode of worship he is himself addicted to. Thus parents often use their power to extinguish good principles in their children, and discourage beginnings of virtue in them.

(2.) Mistaking the *measure*. How often are good parents transported with choler in the corrections they inflict? Others through a fond indulgence altogether neglect it, and give the reins to the follies of their children. But the chastisements God inflicts, are otherwise; he hath a perfect knowledge of all things, is subject to no passion, never afflicts but when there is need, never chastiseth his own, but for their good. God being infinitely wise, cannot err in his judgment of what is convenient for us; he is not biassed by weak affections. David acknowledged this wisdom of God. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes, Psal.* 119. 71. He is wise, and foresees an evil we are apt to run into, and prevents it by affliction; sends Paul

a thorn in the flesh, not so much to correct a present default, as to prevent it, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7, that he might not be lifted up above measure: sometimes he afflicts to make their graces apparent; God afflicted Job in his goods, in his person, that the truth of his faith and patience might be seen in the midst of his sufferings, to the praise of God. He sends not temptations unless there be need, that the *trial of faith may be found to praise and honour*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 6, 7.

Other parents use their arbitrariness often, and not their wisdom; God's afflictions are sovereign acts, but not separated from wise and gracious intentions. But the apostle explains the particular profit which God aims at, *that we might be partakers of his holiness;* to refine their dross, and purify them for himself, and render them fit for the place wherein dwells nothing that is unclean. Earthly parents correct their children, that they may learn useful arts and manners in the world, an external profit chiefly they aim at; sometimes they correct, that their vices may be imitated; God, that his holiness may be communicated here, and blessedness hereafter.

This seems to be an exposition of what he meant by *live*, in the former verse. This preserves us, and renders us partakers not only of holiness, but of his holiness, the holiness which he approves, which he commands, and hath some resemblance and conformity to his own. In the same sense we are said to be *partakers of the divine nature*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4, whereby we have a portraiture of the nature and holiness of God drawn in our souls by the Spirit. It is not that we may possess the holiness of God, but partake of the holiness of God. The lineaments of his image formed in us by the gospel, and by afflictions, are as the beams and sparks of his holiness; the original is in God, the picture of it in the believer; as the light is in the sun, but some splendour of it in the glass upon which it shines.

This God works by afflictions, whereby he makes

us exercise ourselves more in repentance, weans us from the flesh, that would alienate us from God, cleave faster to Christ by faith, who is the spring of holiness, more earnestly thirst to draw of the fountain, and pursue those things that are heavenly. Parents correct their children to bring them to an imitation of their manners. God corrects his to bring them to an imitation of his holiness. They chastise to make their children like them, and God to make his children conform to him.

1. Then afflictions are not always *punishments*, they are not inflicted for satisfaction for sin. God aims at our profit; a judge regards not the profit of a criminal when he condemns him to punishment, but only the honour of the law, and to repair the offence done to the law by the violation of it, and satisfy that justice which hath been violated: but God aims at the advantage of the believing sufferers, and makes them smart to make them gracious and glorious; to impart to them the highest excellency a creature is capable of.

2. A great argument there is from hence to *love God even for afflictions. In all things give thanks*, saith the apostle. In these there is a great reason to give thanks, in regard of their fruit. An earthly father transmits his inheritance to his son, but not his internal endowments; but God communicates his holiness to his children by these means.

3. How *patiently* should we bear them? The majesty of God above earthly parents, and his gracious aim and wise conduct of them, doth oblige us to this duty. He never strikes but with reason, never strikes his children but for their good. Happy blows should be received without murmuring. It is a welcome weapon that hath more of balsam than smart; a blessed sword, that breaks the imposthume. That which is not only profitable, but necessary, calls not only for our patience, but our willing embracing when God wisely inflicts it; besides they are short, they are

of no longer duration than this life. There might be reason to complain much, if it were an eternal smart; but it is only for a little time.

4. We should endeavour to *answer the intention of God;* to form ourselves to that holiness he aims at; to embrace every motion of the Spirit in our afflictions. To that purpose the rod hath a voice, the Spirit hath a voice, both must be listened to.

And because it is a hard matter to be without complaints, the apostle still urges it further, and prevents the grounds of complaint, which is the sharpness of a rod, and sets the smart and fruit in opposition one to another; *Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby*, ver. 11. It is confessed they are grievous, but it is in appearance only; they seem so, but as a beautiful face under a frightful mask; as a bitter potion that gripes, but purgeth. This is an argument taken from the fruit of correction, and amplified by concession of the objection; I confess suffering is grievous, but wholesome. The end and issue of it is to be considered. A rational creature in all things should mind the end as well the means. The end makes a vast difference between things. Because the trouble and grief which is in every chastisement, makes our flesh to apprehend it as an evil, the apostle distinguisheth between what is troublesome and what is desirable, between the pain and the fruit, and draws an argument of patience from the effect.

(1.) All afflictions are *grievous to the flesh.* God doth not expect we should be stoics, to be without sense of grief. Christ himself hath set us a pattern of it, he sheds tears for the death of his friend Lazarus, and sheds drops of blood at the approaching of his suffering; *His soul was sorrowful even to the death;* he was *tempted in all things like to us, yet without sin.* It is no sin to grieve under, to complain of suffering

without murmuring. If we have not a sense of the grief, we can never be capable of the profit of affliction. Without some grief, affliction would leave us worse than it finds us. As we ought to hear God when he speaks, so we ought to fear God when he strikes. At first the trouble of a chastisement does wholly possess our spirits, it makes us mistake the end of it, we cannot sometimes in our pressures imagine that a root so bitter should bear a joyful fruit; as the griping physic afflicts the patient so much sometimes, that he scarce thinks of the good which will issue from it. David often is full of complaints while he is under an affliction, and seems often to have no sense of any thing but the present trouble; but afterwards he hath no sentiments but of the gracious fruit. *In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me. It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Thy rod doth comfort me.* After experience manifests a truth, which the present grief will not often give us leave to consider.

(2.) Though afflictions be grievous, the *fruit is gracious* to a believer. Experience corrects the false judgment we have while we are under a stroke. Indeed afflictions, of themselves, are rather a means to cool our affections to holiness, to extinguish in our minds the sparks of godliness, and make us despond and distrust the grace of God; but God in his sovereign wisdom doth so dispose and manage them, that he makes them end in a happy fruit. By the grace of God they break off those inclinations we have to the world, quicken our prayer, awaken us out of our lethargies, put us upon a review of ourselves. The strings of an instrument yield a different sound, when they are stretched, from what they did when they were slack. It is a fruit of righteousness, holiness, and sanctification, which he had spoken of in the former verse; also righteousness which is a peaceable fruit: as when it is said, the *incorruptible crown of glory*, 1 *Pet.* 5. 4; it is as much as to say, the glory which is a crown incorruptible; so a righteousness

which is the spring of peace and serenity of conscience; *And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever*, *Isa.* 23. 17. It yields the fruit of righteousness, as being a means that brings us nearer to God, in communion with whom that peace doth consist. It brings us to seek in God and Christ, the true remedy of all our evils; and by this means the trouble of our souls is calmed, and an assurance of the grace of God promoted. The joy of the Holy Ghost is often strongest in us, when afflictions are sharpest upon us; *Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost*, 1 *Thess.* 1. 6. And though it be not always so with a believer, yet after the affliction hath wrought kindly, and done its work, God comes in with comfort and joy; as cheering cordials follow bitter physic. They bring forth the fruits of righteousness, not only as the efficient cause, but the means.

(1.) Let us then make a right judgment of afflictions. Let us not think God intends to destroy when he begins to strike. We are often in the same error the apostles were in, when they saw Christ walking upon the waves in the dead of the night, and terrors of a tempest; coming to succour them, they imagined he was a spirit coming to do them mischief, *Mark* 6. 47, 48, 49. The flesh makes us think God often to be our enemy, when he is our friend. But as Christ cried out to them, *Fear not, it is I*; so the apostle doth to believers here; fear not, though the smart be grievous, the fruit is peaceable. If the flesh suffer, it is for the good of the spirit. The issue will declare, that *all things work together for the good of them that love God*, *Rom.* 8. 27.

(2.) Let patience and faith have their perfect work. Affliction makes the beginning sad; patience will make the success glorious. Had the Israelites believed God's promise of deliverance, they had not murmured at the Red sea. God brought them to the Red sea to deliver them from the Egyptians, and

made all their fears end in joy and triumph. The more we trust God, the more he is concerned in our welfare; the more we trust ourselves, the more he doth to cross us. The *committing our way to the Lord*, renders our minds calm and composed; *Commit thy way to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established, Prov.* 16. 3. God hath always *an eye upon them that fear him, Psal.* 33. 18, 19, not to keep distress and affliction from them, but to quicken them in it, and give them as it were a new life from the dead, new fruit from the rod. God brings us into straits, that we may have more lively experiments of his tenderness and wisdom. We should submit our way to the guidance of God's wisdom, with an obedience to his will, and a reliance on his goodness: and then the success will be gracious in this life, and glorious in that which is to come; a peaceable fruit of righteousness in earth and heaven. Wait upon God, seeing he is a *God of judgment, for the Lord is a God of judgment. Blessed are all that wait for him, Isa.* 30. 18. He goes judicially to work, and can best time the execution of his will; God hath as much wisdom to bring an affliction to a good issue, as he hath love at first to inflict it.

THE

REMOVAL

OF

THE GOSPEL.

Rev. 2. 5.

REMEMBER FROM WHENCE THOU ART FALLEN, AND REPENT, AND DO THE FIRST WORKS: OR ELSE I WILL COME UNTO THEE QUICKLY, AND REMOVE THY CANDLESTICK OUT OF HIS PLACE, EXCEPT THOU REPENT.

Introductory remarks—The removal of the gospel the severest judgment—Shall not be removed out of the world—May be removed from particular places—It has been removed—The Jews an instance of this—The seven churches of Asia—What aggravates the removal of the gospel—The gospel is the greatest blessing—No calamity so much to be dreaded as the removal of it—All blessings depart with it—Connected with the utter ruin of nations—Accompanied with spiritual judgments—Fear of this judgment inculcated—The several grounds of this fear stated——The long continuance of the gospel a subject of gratitude—The gospel should be improved—Repentance and prayer—Dependance upon God the author of the gospel.

THESE words are part of the epistle of Christ, as king and governor to the church of Ephesus. And they contain a severe threatening, after a charge and indictment brought in against that church. The bill

is preferred against them by Christ, who is described, ver. 1, to be him *that holds the seven stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.* He holds the stars in his hand to shew his tenderness; in his right hand, to show his power; and he walks among the candlesticks to show his care over them, and his love to them. Before he brings the charge, he takes notice of what was praise-worthy in that church, and gives them the commendation of their patience under persecution, and zeal for his glory, ver. 2, 3. But, alas! the case was changed, their zeal was cold, and their love was flatted, ver. 4, *she had left her first love.* Ephesus was a mart-town of Asia, famous for Diana's temple, *Acts* 19. 28, which brought resort, and consequently wealth to her, from all parts of Asia and Greece.

I have formerly noted, that the condition of the church, in the several states of it is described in these epistles. Crocius discourseth of them to this purpose;* whence our Dr. Moor might take his rise for that ingenious and rational piece he hath writ upon these epistles in this sense. The design of this book is to predict what should happen to the church in all ages, till the conclusion of time; and what is spoken here to these *seven churches,* seems to be greater than can well suit these places in Asia, while they remained christian. The conversion of the Jews seems to be intimated to be brought to pass in the Philadelphian state, to which we, probably, are approaching after a smart trouble; *I will make those that are of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie, behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, Rev. 3. 5.* Those that are of the Jewish synagogue, which he calls the synagogue of Satan, being blinded by the god of this world, to keep up that worship which God hath rejected; which are, indeed, Jews in the flesh, and by circumcision,

* Epist. Dedicat. ante Syntag.

but are not so in spirit; or it may be meant of some people that pretend to be of the Jewish race, or practising the Jewish rites, that shall in that state of the church give up their names to christianity.

And for Laodicea, it is argued that the epistle cannot be meant of local Laodicea, because that is reported to be swallowed up by an earthquake in the time of Nero, before the writing of this epistle. And it is that state of the church which shall be before the day of judgment; and therefore fitly put in that term of Laodicea, which signifies in the Greek, the people's judgment, or the judgment of the people. This Church of Ephesus is understood by him to be the first and apostolical condition of the church; or, perhaps, not that *primo-primitive*, but the state of the church immediately succeeding it. It is true the primitive church was fired with zeal and ballasted with patience; she had a courage to assert the truth, and a meekness to bear her troubles; and detected those false apostles that would join works with the righteousness of Christ in justification. But after the death of the apostles, yea, and in the life of Paul, there were some that made disturbance, would have blended the gospel doctrine and worship with legal ceremonies. And when the head of that great founder of the Gentile church was laid, coldness in christianity, and corruption in doctrine, crept in. Observe here,

1. How unwilling is the nature of man to be guided *by the word of Christ?* Men will be mixing their own wills and wisdom, with the wisdom and will of God. Error could not else have crept in so soon, while the memory of the apostles lasted. The church of Ephesus was the first state of the church next to the primitive, and this gave strong provocations to God to take away the gospel from her.

2. Christ takes an *account* both of the good and evil works of a church. One makes him not overlook the other; he will not reward any for their good, or spare them in their evil. He sweetens his reproof

here, with a commendation, like oil that makes way for a sharp nail. He reckons their labour, patience, sense of his dishonour, their discovery of seducing spirits, the circumstances of their zeal for his name, and constancy and unweariedness in it. He sees our good grain, and beholds our chaff; he take notice of our decreases and of our decays.

3. Grace does not privilege sin. Though he takes notice of their worth, yet he charges them with their crime. Christ takes more notice of the sins of his people than of the sins of others. Others' sins are enmities, he expects no other from them; their sins are unkind, and more affect him. Their professions, mercies, covenants, assistances, privileges require a suitable walk. Judas's betraying Christ did not so much trouble him, as Peter's denial of him. We do not read that he thought of Judas after he had betrayed him; but he would look back upon Peter whilst he was exposed to the danger of his life, and approaching to a contest with death and wrath. Christ will be terrible in the assembly of his saints: he will not endure the dustiness of his golden candlestick.

We may see here, 1. The disease: *Thou hast left thy first love*, ver. 4. 2. The issue of it, if it were not cured: *The removal of the candlestick.* 3. The cure: which consists, 1. In consideration: *remember.* 1. Of their present condition: *fallen.* 2. Of the term of their apostacy: *whence thou art fallen:* reflect upon your present condition, and your former state, and compare them one with another.

2. In contrition: *repent.* 3. In reformation. And *do thy first work*, write after thy former copy. This method of cure was to be observed; otherwise Christ would take away the golden candlestick.

Do thy first works: reduce thyself to the form of primitive christianity: away with all mixtures in worship, chilness in discipline, looseness in practice.

Doct. Reformations are *reductions of things to their original pattern*, and first institution. When

Christ would reform the abuses in marriage, he doth not bring them to the practice of their fathers, and the practice of their posterity, but measures both that of their own, and that of their ancestors, by the first rule; *In the beginning it was not so*, *Matt.* 19. 18. We are usually swayed by customs in morals, and precedents in politicals; when custom and prescription alter not the nature of unrighteousness and unreasonableness. True reformations are reductions of things to reason, and reductions of things to scripture.

I will remove thy candlestick out of his place. I shall not trouble you with the different interpretations of it. There was a candlestick within the tabernacle, *Heb.* 9. 2, which had seven branches, wherein lamps were continually presented lighted. The candlestick represented, as a type, the gospel church; and the lamps, the gospel in it; and the oil to supply the lamps, the gifts of the Spirit for the preservation and propagation of the gospel. An allusion is made in this place to the candlestick in the ancient tabernacle. Some think the candlestick with the seven golden branches, represented the seven planets, but with what reason I understand not, since the branches of the candlestick were all equal; but the planets are of a different light and magnitude. The chief intention of the ancient tabernacle was to represent and signify future things. The seven particular churches allude here to the seven branches of that candlestick, seven particular churches, or seven states of the church, all parts of the universal. The chief concern of the candlestick was the light in it, without which, as the tabernacles had been a place of darkness, so is the world without the gospel.

By removing the candlestick is therefore to be understood the removing of the gospel, and so an unchurching of them. Candlestick may be here put for the light in it, by a metonymy of the subject for the adjunct.

We might observe, 1. A nation, people, or church,

that have *been eminent for the owning the sways* and truths of God, may have great decays in their affections, and greatly apostatize. 2. Apostacy in a church is followed with a removal of the gospel. 3. The removal of the gospel is the saddest judgment that can happen to a nation.

We may put the two last together, and so I shall insist on this doctrine, that God often removes the gospel upon provocations, as *the severest judgment he can inflict* upon any unworthy people. Apostacies have been very frequent. Every thing under the sun is subject to alteration and corruption; faith is not an hereditary thing, like a standing patrimony. Children do not always tread in the steps of their ancestors: what they receive only by education, they will easily part with upon some carnal interest, some smiling or frowning temptation. Some have observed that the purity of the gospel hath scarce lasted in a city or province to the third generation. The gospel in the honour of it may remain longer, but usually some error, some mixtures have deformed it. Good corn is scarcely sown, but the devil is as ready to sow his tares.

I shall premise,

1. The gospel shall not be *removed out of the world*, while the world endures. Sion, the universal church, hath a promise of stability; the gospel therefore, whereby she is constituted a church, shall be perpetually in her. The *shutting the gate of the sanctuary*, after the Lord's entering into it, *Ezek.* 44. 2, is expounded by some, of the everlasting dwelling of the Lord in the gospel-church, and never departing from it, as he had done from the temple of Jerusalem. The promise of Christ assures it; *I will be with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Matt.* 28. 20: Not with the persons of the apostles, who were to expire, but with the doctrine of the apostles, which was to endure; though the apostles die in their bodies, yet they live in their doctrine.

2. The gospel hath been, and still may be removed *from particular places.* No particular church, but may be unchurched, because no particular church hath a promise of stability. There is no entail of God's favour to any particular church in the world. The gospel is a candle, and the church is a candlestick, both candle and candlestick are moveable things, not an entailed inheritance. Many nations have had their day of grace set, and are now benighted. Jerusalem had a season wherein to *know the things that concerned her peace, Luke* 19. 42. She finds nothing now, but sorrow and exile. There is a time when the Spirit strives, and there is a time when the Spirit turns his back, and ceaseth any longer wrestling. Sometimes God does both unchurch and unnation a people, sometimes he removes the gospel, and continues a nation in being; but this is rare, to continue providential mercies, when his most excellent truth is departed. But in such cases he gives them up to strong delusions, who would not render themselves at his summons; he continues the substance, while he removes the efficacy by withdrawing his Spirit; and then the gospel is like a carcase without a soul; *They shall hear and not understand, Isa. 6. 9,* 10.

I shall observe this method in handling this doctrine. I shall shew, 1. The gospel has been removed, a nation hath been unchurched. 2. It is the greatest judgment. 3. The use.

I. That a *nation* has been unchurched, and the gospel has been removed,

1. The *Jews* are an eminent instance. They had the gospel in a type, while they enjoyed the ceremonies; they had the gospel unveiled, while they had the presence of Christ among them. God gave them anciently some evidences of the possibility of it. The law was near being quite removed from them, when upon their idolatry, the two tables were broken by Moses, which a little before had been

received from God. When the ark was put into the temple, at Solomon's dedication of it, though it was lodged there without any intention in the people to remove it, yet the staves whereby it was carried were continued in it, 1 *Kings* 18. 9, so that it was ready for a removal at any time; to show, say some, that if the ark were abused and the testimonies slighted, it should be taken from them.

(1.) Consider, they were a people that had the greatest *titles*. They were called *by his name, Jer.* 2. 2, 3. They were his peculiar treasure, they were called God's son, his first-born, his spouse, his portion, inheritance, his delight; yet he hath flung this treasure out of his coffers, disinherited his first-born, cast his children out of his house to be fugitives about the world, his spouse is divorced from him, and his inheritance laid waste. No child was more endeared to a father; no wife more to a husband, than those people to God. Yet how is that Jerusalem which was his delight, now a den of thieves!

(2.) Consider the *privileges* they enjoyed. They were a people cherished in his bosom, walled about with miracles, protected by him in person, he marched before them as their general, and conducted their motions, *Exod.* 13. 21. He was their lawgiver, and penned their statutes, whereby they were to be governed, with his own hand; he spake to them from heaven, (which he did to no other nation) he was their caterer, and provided manna for them in their necessity, and fed them by miracle. He was their bishop to settle them a church, and their prince and magistrate to form them into a state: not only their religion, but their civil government, was the birth of the wisdom of heaven. He puts his oracles as a treasure into their hands, *Rom.* 3. 2. The covenant, ark, pot of manna were committed to them, he planted them a noble vine, culled them out from all the nations of the earth, whereby they were made the delights of heaven, and the admiration of the rest of the

world. He made them his garden, they cost him more than all the nations beside, and he seems to have no care of any part of the earth besides them, *Psa.* 147. 19, 20.

The world had his alms, and they the inheritance, the rest of the world were his Ishmaels, and they his Isaacs; and, which is very observable, his first thoughts seem to be, to have the gospel confined only to them in that covenant which he makes with Christ, which is represented in the manner of a treaty between the Father and the Son. He seems to pitch no further than *Israel, in whom he would be glorified, Isa.* 49. 3, till Christ complains of the narrow limits, and gains a larger portion for himself, the terms are then enlarged; *It is a light thing, that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles,* ver. 6. The promises of the Messiah made to Abraham and Jacob, were often with an addition of the clearness renewed to them by the prophets. He chose them of all nations, of whom his Son, the Saviour of the world, should be born, with whom he was first to treat, his personal ministry was designed for them, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel only he was sent, that nation he in person solicited, over them he wept, and for them he prayed, *Matt.* 15. 24. Those that were to carry the gospel into other parts of the world, were selected out of that nation; and though they used him so ill, yet he was indulgent to them, sent his Spirit upon the apostles first at Jerusalem; seemed to have little care of the Gentiles. How long after was it that Peter scrupled to treat with them? But since they have proved false to God, and forgot the Rock of their strength, he exposed them to the fury of a Roman army, tore up the foundations of their government, demolished their temple, caused the land he had infeoffed them in, to cast them out, scattered them over the face of the world, as a spectacle of his vengeance,

and a standing monument, what the case will be of any nation that walks unworthily of the gospel.

(3.) Consider, the multitude of strange *providences* they had. He delivered them to the amazement of all around about them; they were a happy people, in being a *people saved by the Lord, Deut.* 33. 29. They saw more of his wonderful providences than all the world ever since hath done, he put himself out of the ordinary course of providence in their favour, he spread their tables in the wilderness, and filled their cup; no good thing they could have a mind to, but they had for asking; the sun must stand still in heaven to light them to the gaining a victory, if Joshua desire it; they had upon all occasions immediate direction from the ark; what favour did they find from Cyrus after they had been made captives? A hundred thousand were set at liberty by Ptolemy, after they had been enslaved by his father.

When they proved false to God, and played the harlot upon every high hill, and under every green tree, how was their temple and city destroyed, and after some revolution of time repaired, and that by their enemies, as some observe, contrary to all the rules of policy, since the re-edifying their temple, and the repairing the walls of their city, might be encouragements to them to rebel, they being a people that had so often forced their necks out of the conquerors' yoke. And often when the temple wanted repairs, God stirred up the hearts of their enemies to send supplies out of the Roman provinces to beautify it, that as God had at first enriched them by the jewels of the Egyptians, he would maintain their wealth by the assistance of the other Gentiles. And when Pompey entered into their temple, where there was a treasure in the vessels, and instruments of gold, amounting to about nine millions of money (a strong temptation to a generous person) yet God so ordered it, that he could see nothing there but a cloud.

They never were conquered, (which you know was

often) but God raised them up some patrons. Yet notwithstanding all these providences, whereby God so miraculously owned them, and all the dangers from whence he so powerfully delivered them, they are now pulled up by the root, persecuted by man, abandoned by God, *the generation of his wrath, Jer.* 7. 29. Of a tender father, he is become their enraged enemy, and flings vengeance down upon those heads which before he crowned with mercy: no spiritual dew falls upon these mountains of Gilboa. Those that were as pleasant to God as the *grapes in a wilderness to a thirsty traveller, Hos.* 9. 10, are of as little regard as a bramble. Their names are a detestation in nature, and a hissing to the Gentiles. God sometimes embraced the Jews without taking the Gentiles, and now hath received the Gentiles with rejecting the Jews.

2. *The seven churches of Asia*, to whom these epistles are written, are another instance. How do their places know them no more, as once they were? Not only their religion, but their civil politeness, is exchanged for barbarism. They have lost their ancient beauty, for a Turkish deformity. Mahomet's horse hath succeeded in the place of the gospel-dove. The blasphemies of the Alcoran sound where the name of Christ hath been called upon. The triumphant banners of an impostor, advanced where the standard of the gospel had been erected. Christ had a great company of votaries in those places when the ancient Britains were under the empire of Satan: but now he seems to have sowed those places with salt, and made them barren. No courageous Athanasius, or silver-tongued Chrysostom, or lofty Nazianzen to be found in those places. He hath translated the gospel into other parts, and multiplied children in those places which before were barren. We might instance also in the church of Rome, a church whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world; and how is the truth and purity of religion discarded, true faith dwindled into implicit faith, the righteousness of Christ

changed for impotent and feeble merit, pilgrimages, oblations, self-chastisements advanced instead of the virtues of the cross, whole countries made drunk with the wine of her fornication, the glory of the gospel gone, a mere echo only remaining, the end of a voice, and no reality! They are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie.

II. Thing. That the removal of the gospel and unchurching a nation is *the greatest judgment*. Can there be a greater judgment than to have the word of God removed, to want a prophet to instruct and warn, when the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancient? This God threatens as the greatest, *Ezek.* 7. 26. And the church complains of it as the sorest: *We see not our signs, and there is no more any prophet among us, Psal.* 74. 9. It was the greatest token of God's anger, when his glory went up from the cherubims, *Ezek.* 9. 2. *A loco placationis.* How much more terrible is the shaking off the dust of the feet of God against a people, than the shaking off the dust of the feet of an apostle? What greater evidence can there be of a father's indignation against a disobedient son, than not only to disinherit him but disdain to speak to him, or send to him any notice of his mind and will? The misery of the old world was summed up in this, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man, Gen.* 6. 3, and then are the flood-gates of heaven opened. The shutting up the book of mercy, is the opening the book of justice, the unstopping the vials of wrath; this, this is the very dregs of vengeance.

1. The gospel is the *choicest mercy*, and therefore the removal of it the sharpest misery. The gospel is so much the best of blessings, as God is the best of beings. This is the sun that enlightens the mind, this is the rain that waters the heart. Without this we should sink into an heathen, brutish, or devilish superstition. By this the quickening Spirit renews the soul, and begins a gracious and spiritual life, in

order to a glorious and eternal one. It is by this our souls are refined, and our lusts consumed. Without it we are without help, and without hope; without it we have no prospect of a world to come, nor any sight of the paths that lead to happiness. This is the foundation of the peace and joy of our spirits here, this is the basis of our hopes of happiness hereafter. This is a pearl of great price, this is the glory and honour of a church, people, or person, This only instructs us to save our souls.

Your trades may gain and preserve an estate, your bread may nourish your bodies, this only can fatten and prop your souls; had we the law only, which yet is the law of God, we should still find it weak, through the flesh, it cannot now save us, though the observance of it might have made our Father Adam happy. It is the gospel only that is strong to save through the Spirit. The law could bless an innocent man, but the gospel only restores a guilty man. When the candlestick, the gospel, therefore is removed, the light is removed which is able to direct us, the pearl is removed which is able to enrich us. In the want of this, is introduced a spiritual darkness, which ends in an eternal darkness. As the gospel is compared to heaven, and so called the kingdom of heaven, and a people in the enjoyment of it, are said to be *lifted up to heaven, Matt.* 10. 23; so in the want of it, they are said to be cast down into hell, so that what resemblance there is between heaven and the means of grace, that there is between the want of them and hell, both are a separation from God by divorce between God and a people.

2. It is made worse than those judgments, that are accounted the *severest*. Plagues, wars, famine, are lighter marks of divine anger than this. God upon several provocations of the Jews, sent enemies to waste their habitations, and ravage their country, plagues to diminish their inhabitants, yet they were still his people; but when he takes the word and or-

dinances from them, they are loammi, not my people, *Hos.* 1. 9. God may take notice of a people under the smartest afflictions, but when he takes away his word, he knows a people no longer. A father may scourge a child, and yet love him; but when he takes away his treasure, his food from his child, he can no longer be said to love him, he breaks the bands of all relation and natural affection.

This judgment is compared to, and yet made worse than a famine of bread. What more terrible than famine, that hath forced parents against the ties of natural affection to devour their children, and children to feed upon the lean flesh of their parents? What more terrible than a famine, that hath rendered carrion, and the refuse of nature, a delicious food in that extreme necessity? What more dreadful than this, that brutifies the nature of man, and necessitates them to horrid and abominable actions? Yet this is made a light thing in comparison of the other. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord, Amos* 8, 11. In what bitter gall does God here dip his pen? I will not send so light a judgment, I have a worse scourge for them.

When God sent the Jews into captivity, he sent prophets to attend them while they were under the Chaldean power. The remains of them in the land had Jeremiah and Baruch. The captives in Babylon had Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras; after the captivity they had Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi; but in this judgment threatened against Israel, none at all; they were to be without a *prince*, or a *priest*, *Hos.* 3. 4; (for the word signifies both) without a *sacrifice*, without *ephod* and *teraphim.* As the soul surpasses the body in excellency, so a soul famine exceeds a bodily famine. The want of spiritual is more dreadful than the want of corporeal food; this makes us weak, and that makes us wicked; this pines away the strength of

the body, that drives out the health of the soul; this may be a means to make us seek the Lord, but that leaves us groping in the dark. We may live in our souls by the influence of the word, when we have not bread to convey strength to our bodies; but how must the soul languish when it is deprived of spiritual food to nourish her? *Isa.* 30. 20: how doleful would it be to have the ground parched by the sun, the sky emptied of clouds, or the bottles of heaven stopped close without venting a drop of refreshing rain? But how much more deplorable is this judgment, than the withholding the clouds from dropping upon our earth, or the sun from shining upon our fruits?

3. When the gospel departs, *all other blessings depart with it.* When the great charter is taken away, all the privileges depending upon it are snatched away together with it. When God departs, judgments succeed. When the glory of God was gone up from the *first cherub to the threshold of the house, Ezek.* 9. 3, the angels are commanded to execute the destructive sentence against the city, ver. 4. 5.

1. The *honour and ornament* of a nation depart When a man departs from his house, the hangings are taken down, the furniture removed, and the walls left bare. Length of days are the blessings of wisdom's right hand, riches and honour the treasures of her left hand, *Prov.* 3. 16. She departs not from any, to leave her hands, and the blessings of her hands, behind her.

(2.) The *strength* of a nation departs. The ordinances of God are the towers of Sion. The temple was not only a place of worship, but a bulwark too. The ark was often carried with the Israelites into their camp, because there their strength lay; and when David was chased away by his son Absalom, he takes the ark of the tabernacle as his greatest strength against the defection of his son and subjects. When the gospel goes, God continues no longer the protector of a people. When a man hath packed up

his wares, and removed them, he cares not much what becomes of the house he hath left, which while he is in it, he will defend to the uttermost. When the ark was taken by the Philistines, what a rout is there among the Israelites, thirty thousand of them slain, Eli the high priest breaks his neck, his sons fall in the battle, and the *strength and glory* were departed from Israel, 1 *Sam.* 4. The flourishing condition of the *seven churches* withered, when the candlestick was removed.

When the things of Jerusalem's peace were hid from their eyes, the destruction of their city followed, so that *one stone was not left upon another*, because *they knew not the time of their visitation*, *Luke* 19. 42, 44. Then the Roman eagles clapped their wings in judgment upon them; then did the armies of the enemies bring desolation upon the points of their swords; then was the temple filled with the blood of the worshippers, which had been formerly consecrated in a way of mercy by the blood of sacrifices; then were carcases heaped one upon another, and the survivors led in chains to a miserable captivity, or a disgraceful death. What a wasted wilderness is that land now, deprived of that ancient fruitfulness whereby it afforded maintenance to such multitudes, which in David's time were about a hundred and thirty thousand fighting men, *yet thought by some not much bigger than* Yorkshire! When the gospel of peace removes, eternal peace goes with it, temporal peace flies after it; and whatsoever is safe, profitable, prosperous, takes wings and attends it.

4. God hath no other intention in the removing the gospel, and unchurching a nation, but the *utter ruin and destruction of that nation.* Other judgments may be medicinal, this is killing: other judgments may lance and let out the corrupt matter, this opens a passage for life, soul, and happiness: other judgments are but scourges, this is a deadly wound. In other judgments God may continue a Father, in this

he is no other than an enemy and a destroyer. Other judgments may be for conversion, this takes away the means of conversion. The torments of hell are not inflicted for the conversion of the damned, nor the setting of the gospel sun for the conversion of a nation. Other judgments may be be *nubecula cito transitura*, as the father's speech was of the storm in Julian's time: but this is a covering the heavens with blackness, a pulling the sun out of the firmament. A deluge of other judgments may lift the ark higher, but this overthrows it. Other judgments may have their period, this is hardly reversed. Not one of the seven churches restored to their former beauty to this day. This is an absolute shutting the gates of heaven against a people and entailing upon them death and curses.

5. This judgment is accompanied with *spiritual judgments*, which are the sorest. The pounding of the jewel is far worse, and of greater loss, than the breaking the casket. The judgment of being given up to our heart's lusts, to sensuality, pride, hardness of heart, delusions to believe a lie, are the sorest judgments; they are like poison in the soul, that will never leave till it hath eaten out the vitals. There shall then be *no divorce between men and their idols; Your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery*, *Hos.* 4. 11, i. e. spiritual adultery and idolatry. When the check of Idolatry is gone, the fury of that lust will rage.

Use.

Doth God often remove the gospel upon provocations, as the severest judgment he can inflict upon an unworthy people? Then

First. Be *afraid* of this judgment. How do we know but that God hath limited the preaching of the gospel, and the standing of the candlestick in this and that place, only for a time; and when that is expired, it may be carried to another place? We see it hath been so with others. If he hath not spared the natu-

ral branches, nor the church next the primitive, nay those churches where the gospel was planted by the apostles, what reason have we to think he should spare us, who have long ago discarded primitive discipline, and are in a fair way to throw away primitive doctrine after it?

Is England better than Jerusalem and Ephesus? Are the privileges we enjoy a bar to the removal of it? Are our privileges greater than those churches which were planted by the apostles had? Yet the hand of God hath shaken them off. Did not the Jews oppose their descent from Abraham, to whom the promises were made, and the glory of their temples, as an invincible shield against all the threatenings of destruction by the prophets, as though God had been shut up in their temple, and so enamoured with the beauty of that structure, that he could not have the heart to leave them? But are they not rejected, and the Gentiles received in thir room? Is not that which was once the glory of their nation, and the wonder of the world, many an age since fallen to the ground, and mouldered to dust? What though the gospel be not yet gone? That sin may lie at the door which is meritorious of its departure. God's patience does still last, but will it always last?

The gospel may shine bright one day, and be eclipsed the next hour. The Jews might say with confidence, our temple yet stands, till they heard the report of the Roman eagles marching towards them. The sun shone very bright that day Sodom was burned. The preaching the gospel in a plentiful manner, is a sign of judgment where there is unfruitfulness under it. Was not the gospel preached to Jerusalem by the best preachers of it that ever were, the Son of God, and the apostles after him, not many years before the destruction of that city? God is quick in his judgments when the gospel is contemned. The black, red, and pale horse, plague, war, and famine, followed just upon the white horse, to cut off such as

would not be conquered by him that sat on him, *Rev.* 6. 2. &c. The sun shines brightest many times when it is nearest setting.

I must confess I am of the opinion, that the gospel will never be perfectly and totally taken away from these western parts of the world. It hath borne up its head for many ages within the scent of Rome, in those of Piemont, notwithstanding all endeavours to extinguish it. The slaying of the witnesses, or the two prophets, which perhaps is not far off, is not a corporal, but a political death. Their dead bodies would not then be suffered to lie in the streets three years and a half (which we must understand by the three days and a half, *Rev.* 11. 9.) and the resurrection of them, the returning of the spirit of life into them, is not to be meant of the resurrection of their bodies, but the resurrection of their offices; which political slaying is to be not long before the fall of the *tenth part of the city, i. e. Rome;* that city being the tenth part in greatness now of what it was anciently. And before the fall of Babylon the everlasting gospel shall be published with more efficacy than in many years before, ver. 13. And therefore I think the gospel will never totally depart, though it may for a while be much obscured.

And I cannot but mind you of an observation a Jewish writer hath of the lamps in the temple *, that though some of them went out in the night, yet the western lamp was always found burning. The lamps were representations of the gospel, and this might signify the perpetuity of the gospel in the western parts of the world, when we see it is extinguished, or at least burns very dim, in most of the eastern parts. Yet a great eclipse I fear; the interposition of a black moon between us and the sun, an Antichristian smoke out of the bottomless pit to darken the sun and the air. In the description of the Sardian church,

* Kimchi in 1 Sam. 3. cited by Lightfoot Temple, chap. 14. S. 4. p. 83.

Rev. 3. 1, 2, 3, which is the state of the church where we are, Christ speaks of decays coming on them, with some sharp scourge, but doth not threaten the removal of the candlestick. And may we not have just reason to fear it? To fear, I say, a judgment like this of removing the gospel, the removal of it in part? Bethel, when Jacob laid his head there, was a place where angels went up and down in vision; afterwards it was changed into Bethaven, where calves and devils were worshipped, when Jeroboam swayed the sceptre.

1. Is not our *prophaneness* a just ground of our fear? Is there not more wickedness found amongst us where the glorious gospel hath shined, than among them that live under the fogs of the Turkish alcoran? Have not our fruits been grapes of Sodom, and clusters of Gomorrah? Have not many that have been lifted up to heaven by the presence of the gospel, walked as if they had the seal of hell in their foreheads? A fulness of iniquity makes the harvest ripe, and fit for the sickle, *Joel* 3. 13. Why may we not fear the clouding of the gospel, as well as we have heard of Moses's breaking of the tables of the law when he found a people given to luxury, sensuality, and idolatry? When Eli the priest is remiss, and Phinehas his son is profane, when there is little care of the true worship of God, and no censures for prophaneness of life, is not the fruit of this an Ichabod, *the departure of the glory from Israel?* 1 *Sam.* 4. 21. What can be expected, when the punishment of prophaneness is neglected, and the practice of piety hath been discouraged? When the Jewish vineyard brought forth wild grapes, God commanded the clouds to *rain no more* upon it, *Isa.* 5. 6.

2. Is not the *slighting of the means* of grace a just ground of this fear? When reformations have not answered calls, nor improvement answered mercies conferred; when we have fought against God with his own gifts, and contemned that rich mercy we

cannot want without ruin. Doth not every man's observation witness, that this contempt of the gospel hath been a national sin in those frequent and repeated endeavours to suppress the purity of it, and tire out the professors thereof; and as a great man saith, they had rather part with the gospel than part with a rag. And is it not to be observed, that in many of those places where the gospel was powerfully preached in our memories, the very sense of it seems to be worn out? What can be expected, when children throw a precious commodity in the dirt, but that the parents should take it away, and lay it in another place, and lash them too for their vanity? God will not obtrude the gospel long against men's wills.

When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart from their coasts, Christ granted their wish, and turned his back. When there is no delight in the word, sabbath, gospel, then comes a famine of the word, *Amos* 8. 5. After Christ had pronounced a *Wo upon Bethsaida, Matt.* 11. 21, though he came afterwards to the town, and had the opportunity of curing a blind man, he would not do it in the town, and commanded him after he was restored, not to go into the town, nor tell it to any inhabitants of it, *Mark* 8. 22. 26. He would spill no water upon that ground he had cursed. We shall know God, *if we follow on to know the Lord.* If we then neglect the knowledge of God, which is the end of the gospel, to what purpose should means of knowledge continue among us? God will not suffer the waters of life to run there, where he sees they will altogether run waste, the gospel hath too much worth, and the honour of God is too much interested in it, to leave it exposed to the injuries of men, without revenging it.

3. And what shall I say of the *barrenness* of the church? How few real converts are there brought forth and nursed in the churches? God seems to have written barrenness in her womb, and dryness upon her breasts. Doth not ignorance sway where

before the gospel triumphed? When the ground yields but a faint increase, and answers not the cost and labour of the husbandman, he lays it fallow. The abatement of the powerful workings of the Spirit is a presage of a removal or dimming the light in the candlestick. When God withdraws gifts from his ministers, and the Spirit from the hearers, it is a sign he will take away that lamp into which he will pour no more oil.

May we not add to this, the *apostacy* of the age. Where is the old primitive spirit, I had almost said puritan spirit, that sincere love to all the truths of the gospel, that valuation of all its ordinances? What generous designs are taken up to glorify and propagate it? Here pride and worldliness, like Pharaoh's lean kine, devour the fat ones of spiritual duties. How seldom have we a sense of God, an estimation of Christ, when we speak of him?

4. And may not the *errors* in the nation, step in as the occasion of our fears? Not little petty errors, but errors about the foundation, when the *doctrine of justification* is not only denied, but scoffed at, a doctrine which as it was owned or opposed, was deservedly accounted in the first times of the reformation, *articulis stantis & cadentis ecclesiæ.*

5. What should I speak of the *divisions* amongst us? These preceded the ruin of the Jews, and made way for the fall of the *seven churches of Asia.* By these did Rome grow to that height, as to put a veil upon the gospel, and in most places to extinguish it. The concord of the ancient christians was the cause of the flourishing progress and increase of the gospel; when they began to scuffle, their feuds rose to such a height, as threw down the candle which gave them light; and ruined that which the union of the former christians had strongly built. * When children fall out and fight about the candle, the parents come and

* Fuller.

take it away, and leave them to divide their differences in the dark. We may justly fear God will take away that light which we quarrel by, instead of walking and working by.

6. May we not consider also the *death of the ablest ministers* as a sad prognostic? Sometimes indeed the removal of signal instruments portends a nearness of some great appearance of God. When the people were upon the skirts of Canaan, first Aaron, and then Moses, are snatched away; but there were others to succeed in their room, a zealous Phinehas was left behind Aaron, and a believing and courageous Joshua succeeded Moses. Many good men may do things offensive to God, and the work of their generation; for which cause God will not let them live to see the blessings he is bringing upon a people. But, alas! it is oftener a sign of an approaching judgment.

When the Lord gives out his word, *great is the company of them that publish it*, *Psa.* 68. 11. When the Lord will remove his word, small is the company of them that publish it, till at last not one labourer may be left, because God will not have a harvest to gather in, but leave the place as a wild field to ravenous beasts, and the fowls of the air. Methusaleh is taken away just before the deluge. And Ambrose's head was scarce cold in his grave before the Goths invaded and wasted Italy. It was observed by the Jews, that while they were in God's favour, before the sun of one righteous man set, the sun of another righteous man did arise. Before Moses's sun set, Joshua's sun arose; before Eli's sun set, Samuel's sun arose; and this, they say, is the meaning of that place, 1 *Sam.* 3. 9, that before *the lamp of God* went out, the spirit of prophecy came upon Samuel. Is it thus with us? Doth a new spring equal the old stock that are gone? How few do possess a prophet's spirit among them that wear a prophet's garment?

We may well therefore fear an eclipse of the gospel; and many eyes may not see the emerging of it out of that eclipse. It is worth our consideration, that when the spies that were sent to Canaan returned, and gave a good report of the land, the common multitude would not believe them, they would return back to Egypt; and though they had been lashed for their murmuring, yet after this provocation, and the slighting the good land, and the perfection of the deliverance in the possessing of Canaan, God swore the destruction of that generation, *Numb.* 14. 21, 22, 23, (though because of the word past, he did not deprive their posterity of the enjoyment of the promised land;) and God never left, till he had swept away that generation, before the people came to Canaan.

If the removal of the gospel be so great a judgment, we have reason *to bless God for its continuance* so long among us. What a grace is it, that God hath drawn us out of the depths of error and folly, wherein other nations have been plunged so long a time! How mercifully hath God indulged us with that, which thousands of heathens have wanted, and do to this day! Many in the world never enjoyed it, and many that have had it, have now lost it. We have been like Gideon's fleece, wet, while most of the world have been dry. He hath nourished us with heavenly manna, making it to fall every day at our gates, without putting us to much labour to gather it.

That ever God should vouchsafe a light to direct us, who are descended from a race of first Pagan and then Popish idolaters, plunged in superstition! How criminal will our ingratitude be, if we have not lively sentiments of his immense goodness! God hath yet rained upon us, and not upon many of our neighbours, who are under the thickness of Popish fogs. We are yet in the way where his blessings be, and where his heavenly manna often falls. How

deplorable would our case have been, if we had been starved for want of food? Had the sun been extinguished, and the stars put out, and our residence had been in a gloomy and dolesome world, ignorance might have bemisted our minds, and an implicit faith, we know not in what, have hood-winked us to damnation; our bibles might have been as sealed books, and a crime as bad as atheism so much as to peer into the word of God.

Traditions might have been mingled with the oracles of God, whereby the wisdom of God would have been blemished; the merits of Christ might have been mated with the merits of men, whereby the grace of God would have been dimed; and worship given to idols and images, whereby the glory of God would have been rifled. What a ravishing mercy is it, that our brains have not been knocked out by St. Peter's successor? That God hath hitherto continued our preservation, when the seal of the fisher had ratified our destruction? Anti-christianism leaves men in thick darkness. It is the gospel dispels our ignorance, and disperseth the beams of saving knowledge. It is this which rescues you from despair, by showing you the doctrine of justification, which heathens could never attain to, and anti-christianism would fain expunge out of the world. It is the gospel acquaints you with the fulness of the satisfaction of Christ; whereas anti-christianism would fright you with a pretended fire of purgatory, to empty your purses, and defeat your heirs.

The gospel teaches you to worship God only, whereas anti-christianism would divert your prayers to saints, perhaps to St. Garnet, and St. Faux, saints of a new stamp and saints of so bad a hue, that a sober man would never admit to be his servants. It is the gospel that fills you with peace, that settles you upon the basis of an infinite satisfaction of the Redeemer, that elevates you in a sincere belief, not only above the fears of a pretended purgatory, but of a

real hell. It is the gospel that puts you upon a real sanctification, a mortification of lust by the power of Christ's death, and the grace of his Spirit, not by bodily torturings, whereby the soul may be rendered unfit for its proper function in worship. It is the gospel that directs us in an inward holiness of heart, and frees us from being painted tombs and gilded sepulchres. How much ought we to bless God for the continuance of this gospel among us!

3. It should teach us to *improve* the gospel while we enjoy it. The time of the gospel revelation is the time of working. Good entertainment and good improvement invites the gospel to stay; ill usage drives it out of doors. * God hath allowed us his gospel, and set his candlestick among us, but not left it to our discretion to do with it what we please. He hath given it to us, as he did the angel to the Israelites, *to comfort and conduct them, Exod.* 23. 20, 21, but with a caution not to despise and provoke him, because his name was in him. Let us improve the gospel dispensation to the getting of a gospel nature. It is not enough to be within the visible ark, so was a cursed Cham. Let us not receive the grace of God in vain, but adorn the gospel by a gospel spirit and a gospel-practice, and walk as children of light. Let us not trample it under our feet, but put our souls under the efficacy of it, and get from it the foretastes of a heavenly and everlasting life. Let us not loiter while the sun shines, lest we be benighted, bewildered, and misled into quagmires and puddles by some *ignis fatuus*. We cannot command the sun to stand still and attend our pleasure: it will go its course according to the word of its governor, and listens not to the follies of men, nor stays for their loiterings.

Let not an anti-christian principle reign in your hearts: implicit faith is against the improvement of the gospel. There is as much of it in practice in

* Claud de nopces. p. 179.

England, as there is of principle in Rome. How many believe as their church, or churchmen believe, without being able to render a reason why they do so? The gospel was given for every man to study and embrace; to embrace, knowingly, not blindly, If we do not increase in knowledge and grace by it, we anticipate the judgment of God; we remove that from us voluntarily, which God accounts the removal of judicially to be the most deplorable misery. If we do not improve and hold fast what we have received and heard, the coming of Christ in a way of revenge will be sudden, like a thief in the night, and we shall not know what hour he will come upon us till we feel the stroke. I mean not by death, but some sore scourge; for so he speaks to the church of Sardis, the state wherein the church is at this day, *Rev.* 3. 3.

4. Let us prevent by *repentance and prayer* the removal or eclipse of the gospel. The loss of your estates, the massacreeing of your children, the chains of captivity, are a thousand times more desirable than this deplorable calamity. Estates may be recovered, new children raised, fetters may be knocked off, new houses may be reared upon the ashes of the consumed ones, the possession of a country regained; but it is seldom the gospel returns when carried away upon the wings of the wind. God indeed is interested in the preservation of religion and a church, but not in this or that particular church, not among this or that particular people: rather than want one, he will raise up stones to be children to Abraham.

As he will not have his blessings abused, so he will not have his gospel extinguished in all parts of the world, or all parts of this western world. But does this secure us from any great eclipse? What if God will not remove his gospel? May he not suffer many to be infected with popery? May not many of your friends, children, be tainted with this leprosy, that may prove incurable in them? What if there be a likelihood that it will not endure long? If it shall

enter upon the stage, must we not therefore endeavour to prevent it? Prophecy is the rule of our foresight, precept is the rule of our duty. What if God will not remove the gospel? May he not bring a sharp persecution? Is not the enemy at our door? The rod shaken over our heads? Have we not gathered the twigs of it ourselves, and formed a scourge for our own backs? Did we not first let in the serpent's head? And what should we expect but that he will get in his whole body? What can we expect, but that God should begin his judgments at his own sanctuary that has been defiled with so much sin?

Let us therefore meet God in an humble reforming posture, and lay hold on his strength; consider where we left him, and do our first work; whence we are fallen, and fallen by our own fault and peevishness, fallen from a zeal for God, a national endeavour for the propagation of the gospel. Let us desire him, as the disciples that were going to Emmaus did Christ; *Lord, abide with us, for the evening begins to come, and the day is far spent*, *Luke* 24. 29. Our Saviour did so, and gave them his blessing before he vanished again out of their sight. God may deal so with us, and leave some notable blessing with us, till he comes again to pitch his sanctuary in the midst of us for evermore, as the promise is, *Ezek.* 37. 28.

Let us therefore seek to him, chiefly to him, only to him, he only can remove the candlestick, he only can put his hand as a bar upon the light. Men may be instrumental, but it is Christ only removes the candlestick, and he only can maintain it against the puffs of men and devils. He hath the enemies in a chain, and the full command of their breath. Place no confidence in men; some may have some power to give some relief, and will not. Others may have will to help, and cannot. If we maintain our feud with God, he will bid the gospel go, and it shall go. If we make our peace with him, he will bid the gos-

pel stay, and it shall stay. As he hath angels to bring, so he hath angels to carry away the everlasting gospel. Remember the threatening in the text is not absolute; there is an else, and an except, to mitigate it. *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

WEAK GRACE VICTORIOUS.

Matt. 12. 20.

A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK, AND SMOKING FLAX SHALL HE NOT QUENCH, TILL HE SEND FORTH JUDGMENT UNTO VICTORY.

PART I.

PRESERVATION AND FINAL VICTORY OF WEAK GRACE.

The text includes an object—An act—And the continuance of it—The doctrine of the text—Weak grace victorious—The love of God engaged to secure its triumph—The power of God—The holiness of God—The wisdom of God—The glory of God—Christ is engaged in the triumph of weak grace—As a purchaser—As a proprietor—As a steward.

WE need not take our rise higher than ver. 17, where the quotation out of *Isa.* 42 begins, where you find God like a herald proclaiming his Son to the world, under the name of his servant; *Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him,*

and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles, Matt. 12. 18. It contains,—1. His election of him, God chose, called him to his mediatory office. 2. The agreeableness of the person to God, he did wholly acquiesce in him, and deposit in his hand the concerns of his glory. 3. The ability and assistance God gave him, *I will put my Spirit upon him.* 4. The work he should do: *he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.* Ver. 19, his coming is set down: not with pomp, or noise, *he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.* The meekness and tenderness of his carriage, *he shall not cry. Palum noluit fieri hominum vitia,* as Grotius; he shall not be contentious with the people; of which a sign is, an immoderate raising of the voice, and clamour against them.

Take notice here of,

First, The object.

A *bruised reed.* Hierom takes it for a musical instrument made of a reed, which shepherds used to have, which when bruised, sounds ill, and is flung away by the musician, as disdaining to spend his breath upon such a vile instrument that emits no pleasant sound. But Christ will not cast off poor souls that cannot make so good music in God's ears as others, and answer not the breathings of the Spirit with that life and vigour, but he will take pains with them to mend them. Bruised reeds, such as are convinced of their own weakness, vanity, and emptiness.

The *smoking flax* of the wick of a candle, wherein there is not only no profit, but some trouble and noisomeness. Though the soul is noisome by reason of its corruptions, yet he will not blow out that expiring fire, but blow it up and cherish it; he will not rigidly oppress and throw off those that are weak in grace, and faith, and hope, but he will heal them, nourish them, inflame them. Maldonat interprets it, that though he walk in the way where bruised

reeds lie, he will step over them, and not break them more; he will not tread upon a little smoking flax that lies languishing upon the ground, and so put it out with his foot, though it hurts the eyes with its smoke, and offends the nostrils with its stench. Smoking souls, that have some weak desires and fuming towards heaven, some small evaporations of their spirits towards God, he shall not quench them. The Chaldee paraphrase, those meek or gracious ones which are like a bruised reed, shall not be broken by him.

2. The *act*. He shall *not break; not quench, litotes*, or *meiosis;* he shall mightily cherish, support the reed, inflame the flax.

3. The *continuance* of it; *till he sends forth judgment unto victory*. In Isaiah it is, *Till he bring forth judgment unto truth; vere judicabit*, so Menochius, so the Septuagint hath it; but Matthew alters it, and instead of truth, puts *victory*.

Judgment is taken several ways. For,—1. *Wisdom; The Lord will wait that he may be gracious, for the Lord is a God of judgment, Isa.* 20. 18: i. e. of wisdom to give in the most convenient season.

2. *Righteousness; Judgment is far from us, neither doth justice overtake us, Isa.* 59. 9: i. e. there is no holiness in us.

3. *Overthrow* of a christian's enemy; *Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out, John* 12. 3, now shall Satan be conquered; *He shall bring forth judgment unto truth:* i. e. *he shall govern in righteousness, Isa.* 42. 3. Now Christ's government being chiefly in the souls of men, he shall assist and encourage that which is the better; as governors ought to be encouragers of the good, and discouragers of the bad. Matthew explains this, and shows the consequence of this government, if it be in truth, it will make the better part victorious. Some by judgment understand the gospel, the new evangelical law; *The isles*

shall wait for his law, ver. 4; so Christ will not rest till he makes the gospel glorious, and advances it in the world above the lusts and idolatries of men, which then overflowed the world. Some by judgment understand grace, which is the draught and copy of the gospel drawn in the soul; and both those senses the words will bear; the words in Isaiah seem to bear the first sense, *The isles shall wait for his law.* The other seems most consonant to Matthew, and *in his name shall the Gentiles trust;* i. e. he will make their faith victorious, the effect of this judgment, or evangelical law, should be the victoriousness of grace and faith.

Implanting grace in the heart is the main design of the gospel; and grace is nothing else but a moulding the soul into the form of that law and doctrine of Christ; as Christ will make the gospel glorious, above all the carnal reasonings of men, so he will make grace, which is the end of the gospel, victorious above all the corruptions of men. In this latter sense we shall now handle it, Christ shall make those beginnings of grace and infused habits, to obtain a perfect conquest. By his governing of it, he shall make the conquest over corruption perfect; or if κρίσις be taken as the physicians use it, for the κρίσις of a disease, he shall make the κρίσις end in victory, and nature the conqueror over the disease.

Doctrine. True, though *weak* grace, shall be preserved, and in the end prove victorious.

Seeds of grace, though mixed with a mass of corruption, cannot be overcome by it, as gold cannot be altered in its nature by the dross, or transformed into the nature of the rubbish in which it lies. Grace is surely weakest at the first infusion, when it is newly landed in the heart from heaven, when the devil and wickedness of man's nature have taken the alarm, and drawn together all the armies of hell to hinder its progress; yet though it be thus, in so weak a condition, indisposed to make a stout resistance, having got but

little footing in the heart, and a man's own inclinations not well reconciled to it, nor his evil apprehensions and notions fully exterminated, and the predominant corruptions that held the empire before, having received but their first wound, and being much unmortified, and grace also as yet but in a strange soil, not naturalized at all: yet is grace then so strong, that all the legions of hell cannot totally worst it; though it be like a grain of mustard-seed newly sown, yet it springs up into a mighty tree; for as the weakness of God is stronger than men, so is the weakness of grace stronger than sin in the event and issue. The meanest grace is above the highest intellectual parts, as the smile of a sun-beam is more powerful to chase away the darkness of the night, than the sparkling of a diamond. According to the degrees of its growth, its effects are wonderful; as a small spark by a breath of wind growing into a flame, may fire and consume a spacious and stately building. The weakest grace by degrees shall have strength, *Zech.* 12. 8, which is meant of the Jews' strength at their conversion; *he that is feeble shall be as David*, who was a mighty man of valour, and when a stripling, laid Goliah in the dust, but in the strength of Christ, for the *house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before him*, i. e. Christ that descended from David. In the text you see God assures us, that Christ shall perform this; therefore let us see what engagements are on God's part, and what also on Christ's part, to effect this business, which will be sufficient demonstrations of this truth.

In *general.* Grace hath great allies, the greatest power that ever yet acted upon the stage of the world, had a hand in the birth of it. Should we see all the states of the world engaged in bringing a person to a kingdom, and maintaining him there in his right, we could not rationally think that there were any likelihood they should be baffled in it. The Trinity sat in consultation about grace: for if there were such

a solemn convention held about the first creating of man, *Gen.* 1. 26, much more about the new and better creating of him, and raising him somewhat above the state of a man. The Father decrees it, Christ purchases it, the Spirit infuseth it, the Father appoints the garrison, what grace shall be in every soul, Christ raiseth this force, and the Spirit conducts it. The Trinity have an hand in maintaining it; the Father purges out corruption, the Son washes, and the Holy Ghost sanctifies, all this is but the carrying on the new creature; *But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, not by works of righteousness, &c. but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit.* 3. 4, 5, 6. *God our Saviour*, i. e. God the Father; the Father is the author of salvation from sin, Christ the purchaser, the Spirit the conveyer. There is a special relation between the Trinity and grace, the Father is said to beget us, *John* 1. 13. And we are said to be the seed of Christ, *Isa.* 53. 10, and *born of the Spirit*, *John* 3. 6, that therefore which hath so strong a relation, cannot perish.

First. The *Father*, who is the first root of grace in his good will and pleasure. Though Christ merited the fruits of election, yet he did not merit election itself, for Christ himself is a fruit of that first election.

He is engaged in this work, in respect of his *attributes.* Grace will engage God's assistance. Every grace is part of the divine nature, because it is an imitation of one or other of the divine attributes, and exemplifies the divine perfections in its operations; *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you may shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 9. *Shew forth the praise* of God, ἀρετὰς, the *virtues* of God, Grace in all the parts of it glorifies one or other attribute of God; humility his power, contentedness his sufficiency,

watchfulness his omniscience, prayer his sovereignty, repentance and sorrow for sin his justice, faith his love and truth, a fiduciary reliance on his word, his wisdom, &c.

1. The *love* of God is engaged in it. The riches of his grace was the motive to work grace in the heart. Goodness made him bring light into the world, and it is the same motive makes him bring grace into the soul. It is called God's workmanship, his poem, *Eph.* 2. 10, ποίημα, about which, he spent more skill than about all other things. As usually men are more lofty in a poem than in prose, and enrich it with the sublimest fancies, and diligently observe their numbers and measures; so is God exact in the production of the new creature, which is rather his ποίημα, than ἔργον, as if it were not so much the work of his hands, as the work of his heart; for as, ver. 18, his soul was pleased in Christ, so in all things which make to the glory of Christ. His soul, it notes an high joy, which we find not expressed of the creation; and therefore his heart is chiefly set upon grace, as that which he chiefly designed Christ to purchase, and Christ to implant.

Well then, did God's love give his Son to die for thee, to purchase that grace? And will not the same love engage his power to preserve and perfect that grace? Shall his common love to his creature, cause him to provide for sparrows, and will he neglect his children? Shall he provide for his children, and not stand by to second that which gives them the denomination of children? Shall their hairs be numbered, and not one fall to the ground without the will of God? Hairs, I say, which are inconsiderable, of which there is no miss, no endangering of life by their fall; and shall grace be thrown to the ground by corruption, which brings down with it the life and happiness of a christian, and the glory of God? No, the weakest grace hath a certain interest in the love of God, because the weakest is the birth of that love;

as the child that is crying in the cradle, is as much related to the Father, as the son stoutly working in the shop.

2. The *power* of God is engaged here. It is not in a bare moral, but physical way, that grace is brought into the soul. If power must be employed in raising the body, less surely will not serve the turn to raise the soul, which is a far more noble and excellent work. Can it be possibly thought, that when Satan, the strong man, had possession of the soul, well provided for defence, had a great interest in the affections and love of a man, making no laws, enjoining no commands but what were suitable and pleasant to flesh and blood, that ever grace of itself could have dispossessed him, and wrested this empire out of his hands? Surely it must be the power of God that did it, else so strong an enemy, so mighty a prince, could never have been overcome, so well beloved a governor could never have been overthrown. God is the strength of the soul; all the contrivances and stratagems against the flesh are from him. *Our sufficiency is of God: we are not sufficient of ourselves,* λογίσασθαι, *to think*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 5, i. e. to come to some certain resolution, as men do when they sum up their particular accounts, or state our own affairs; and when this is done, we cannot will it, or put it in execution without him; therefore, *he works in us both to will and to do, and that of his good pleasure*, *Phil.* 2. 13, εὐδοκίας, love and power is put together. It would be derogatory to God, if that should be totally overcome, which his immediate power is the cause of, put on by his special love; for it would either argue a want of love, or a want of sufficiency to maintain it: but it is not thus; for the same power which brought us to God, keeps us from being drawn from him. *If kept by the power of God through faith*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 5, then that faith is also kept by the power of God; that faith whereby we overcome the invasions of Satan, and repel his fiery darts; that faith

whereby the corruptions of the heart are resisted and expelled by its purifying act; for faith purifies the heart instrumentally, *Acts* 15. 9.

3. The *holiness* of God is here engaged. Men are said to be like God, not in power, infinity, omniscience, &c. but in holiness, which is the attribute most cried up in heaven, *Isa.* 6. 3, an attribute which God most magnifies, as swearing by it, *Psal.* 89. 35, which he does not particularly and expressly by any other attribute; an attribute which he is so tender of: for what is the cause of that justice which employs his power in punishing offenders, but his holiness and hatred of sin? Grace has its print from God, and its conformity to the holiness of God, as appearing in his law. It is the image of God; there is an harmony and proportion of all graces in the soul to those perfections of holiness which are in God, as there is of the members of the body of a child to its father; in respect of this likeness, men are said to be the children of God. It may better be said of grace, than it was said of the soul by the heathen, that it was *scintilla divinæ essentiæ*, or as the Jews say, "souls were the shavings or chips of the throne of glory." Graces are the drops of God's perfections, they are so exact an image of him. In respect of this likeness to God's holiness, gracious souls that have escaped the corruptions of the world through lust, do partake of the *divine nature*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. It is called a bearing the *image of the heavenly*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 48: not that God bestows any thing of the divine essence upon the soul, but an image and representation of himself, just as a seal conveys to the wax the image engraven on it, but not the least particle of its matter, the wax remaining wax, though under another form and figure. This likeness is a likeness to God in his highest perfection, viz. his holiness, which runs through all, and may be applied to all the attributes, as holy power, &c, and herein grace excels the perfections of

the whole creation put together, for all the creatures are not so like to God as grace makes the soul. And how can we imagine any thing, wherein we can be more like to God, than in that which is the highest excellency, and perfection of God? Now seeing grace hath so near a relation to God, and God so delights to see this in his people, that all his end is to make them like him, in completing holiness in them in heaven, and that this is that which Christ must do at the last, present them holy and *blameless without any spot*: will he neglect that which is so dear and like to him? and suffer his own image to be wholly crushed under feet by corruption his basest enemy?

4. The *wisdom* of God is manifested in this. The weakest grace is the birth of his eternal counsel; *Chosen us that we might be holy, Eph.* 1. 4. If thou hast any grace, though never so mean, thou wert from eternity given by God to Christ, and Christ purchased this grace for thee, else the Spirit would never have infused it into thee, for the Spirit receives of Christ and shows it unto you; there was a decree past in heaven for all that grace thou hast. Therefore that which made God at first resolve upon it, and made him send such a force into thy soul, will cause him to perfect it to a complete victory; *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil.* 1. 6. The apostle was confident that because God had begun it, he would perfect it; what ground should he have for this confidence, if weak grace could be totally overcome? God being unchangeable in his counsels and decrees, if any saint whom he hath purposed to save, should be totally drawn from him, it would argue God changeable, that his will was altered, or weak, that his power was extinguished or unwise, that his counsel was rashly undertaken. But surely his love being founded upon his counsel, admits of no change.

Besides, God does infuse grace into those souls which are naturally and morally most incapable of it; the most rugged pieces he smooths, the darkest souls he enlightens, the greatest enemies he makes friends, and would he begin this work to have it presently spoiled? God, before he meddled with any soul, foresaw what contests and conflicts of sin and Satan, there would be against him; he counted all the cost and charges, and all the pains he was to take. And it does not consist with the wisdom of God to lay aside his undertaking, nor with the patience of God not to endure the brunt, when he foresaw every stratagem of Satan against such a soul, when he first set up the standard in it. The gospel is called the *manifold wisdom of God, Eph.* 3. 10. And surely all the effects of it, and this of grace in the heart, which is the chief effect and design of it, is an act of God's wisdom; and should this which is the birth of his manifold wisdom be suppressed?

5. The *glory* of God is visible here. God's end in every thing is his glory, and that which grace aims at is the glory of God. As God minds himself and wills himself the chief good, so does grace mind and will God as the choicest and supreme happiness. Those graces which maintain the hottest fight against corruption, and are the strongest and most active legion, have a peculiar objective relation to God, as love to him, faith in him, desire for him; those graces which are exercised about man, and the duties of the second table, have not so great an interest in this quarrel. Now is it for the honour of God, to let that which is his best friend in the world be totally suppressed? Would not his honour suffer in it? The two sisters thought it a good argument to prevail with Christ to come and help Lazarus when they sent him word, *He whom thou lovest is sick*; and Christ himself took an argument from his friendship to raise him, *Our friend*

Lazarus sleeps. And is it not as good an argument with God to come in for relief of languishing grace, when you send him word how hard it is beset?

Secondly. Christ is engaged in this work. The promise in the text manifests that Christ was ordered by his Father to it, his Father having promised it upon his proclaiming him his chosen servant.

Christ is engaged as, 1, a *purchaser.* He died to *redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Inward works as well as outward, *Tit.* 2. 14. He gave himself that we might be without filth, and at last without spot, wrinkle, or blemish; *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church,* not an imperfect church; *not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;* any thing like them; *but that it should be holy, and without blemish, Eph.* 5. 25, 26, 27. To sanctify or cleanse by degrees, to perfect it by wiping out all the spots, and smoothing the wrinkles, and making it highly beautiful, fit to be presented to himself as his eternal spouse. If these spots and blemishes should keep their standing, it would argue, that it was not Christ's purpose in the giving himself to remove them; or that this gift was not equivalent to so great an end, and sufficient to attain it; or else that he hath since repented of his intent; but none of those will hold; this scripture tells us, he gave himself for this purpose; the Father hath exalted him at his right hand for it, and his compassions work powerfully in his bowels even in heaven; he was of the same mind after his ascension, when Paul writ this epistle.

Therefore he is said, *by one offering to perfect for ever them that are sanctified, Heb.* 10. 14, that is, that one offering was of such infinite value, that it per-

fectly purchased the taking away of sin, both in the guilt, filth, and power, and was a sufficient price for all the grace believers should need for their perfect sanctification to the end of the world. There was the satisfaction of his blood for the removal of our guilt, and a treasure of merit for the supply of our grace. Though glory was due to him, even from the moment of his incarnation, as he was the Son of God, yet he would not enter into it, and sit down at the right hand of the majesty on high, till he had purchased grace and all the measures of it for his people, and that by himself, by the laying down his life as the price for it; *When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, Heb.* 1. 3. Sat down, when? Not till he had purged, i. e. made atonement for our sins, and paid for whatsoever holiness or purging grace his people should want. His blood was so valuable, that the treasures of God were dealt out to believers before his coming upon the credit of his bond, much more will they be so after his coming upon God's actual receipt of the price, and our Saviour's sitting down at the right hand of God to see the grace he purchased given out.

Upon this account Christ hath a care of the weakest saint as well as of the most glorious angel, because he died to purchase the weakest believer, not the highest angel, who stood in no need of it; if Christ bought us, we belong to the purchaser, which is the apostle's inference, *Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price,* 1 *Cor.* 6. 19, 20. Not our own governors, not our own keepers. The possession the Holy Ghost hath of us, making us his temples, is by virtue of this price. If Christ died, that his people might have grace, and that it might be powerful, shall lust trample upon that which Christ hath so dearly bought? Was it a light thing for which he endured all the torments upon the cross, and will he now make no matter of of it? If he purchased us, and grace for us when we

were enemies, will he not preserve it in us, since we are his friends? Shall he be at the expence of his richest blood to buy it, and spare his power to secure it? Is the right of his purchase of so low a value with him, as to suffer it to be usurped by his greatest enemy?

2. Christ is engaged as an *actual proprietor* and possessor by way of *donation* from his Father. Every believer is God's gift to Christ as Mediator for this end, to give eternal life to them, and every one of them; *That I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me*, *John* 17. 2, which eternal life is the knowledge of God, which includes all grace. And they were given to him that they might be perfect; one, as the Father and the Son are; *John* 17. 11, keep through thy own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. He gave them with an intent that they should be one in as high a manner as the creature is capable of; this was the end both of God's giving and Christ's keeping; for the particle ἵνα may refer to keep, or to given. If they be not at last one, the end of God's giving must be frustrated, and the petition of Christ not heard. Christ will not undervalue his Father's gift. We prize even small tokens from a friend we love. Because our Redeemer valued this gift, he accepted of it, and took it into his own possession. And because he loves his Father, he will answer the ends of this donation. Christ calls those his sheep by virtue of this donation, *John* 10. 16. Our being his sheep by virtue of this gift, will be as much a reason to preserve us in faith, as it was at first to confer it on us. The same reason is as valid for preserving as for first conferring, and that is the Father's gift.

Our Lord Jesus is proprietor and possessor by the *conquest* of every gracious person, and whatsoever was contrary to grace. As our Redeemer was to purchase us by his death at the hand of God's justice, so he was to rescue us by his power from the fury of our

hellish oppressor. As he was to appease the justice of God, so he was to deface the works of the devil, 1 *John* 3. 5. He was manifested to take away our sins, ver. 8. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. As God's justice is so perfectly pacified as never to renew the curses of the law against a believer, so is the devil so thoroughly subdued as never to repair the ruins of his works. Did Christ rise as a conqueror out of the grave, to let sin and Satan run away with the fruits of his victory? Shall he overcome the powers of hell, and triumph over them, to let the devil rob him of the honour of his atchievements by regaining his loss? Shall that man of his right hand, whom God hath made strong for himself, that we might not go back from him, *Psal.* 80. 17, be made weak again by man's own corruptions and the devil's repossession? Should grace trickle down under the devil's work, and the standard which was set up in the soul when it was first snatched from the power of darkness be pulled down, what would become of the glory of our Redeemer's death, and the honour of his victory? What a disparagement would it be, to have that which he paid so great a price for, which was the special gift of his Father, the acquisition of the travail and sweat of his soul, wrested out of his hand by an enemy he hath subdued, condemned upon the cross, and triumphed over at his ascension! No; this will never be. Christ and the Father are one in operation; and whom God delivers from the power of darkness, he translates into the kingdom of his dear Son; not to return under the government of a hated devil; and makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, *Colos.* 1. 12, 12, not to be partakers of the inheritance of the devils in darkness. Neither the Father nor the Son will lose the fruit of their pains.

The Lord Jesus is proprietor and possessor by mu-

tual *consent* and *agreement*. He hath possession of them by God's gift, and their own choice; *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand, John* 10. 27, 28. Believers are his sheep in his hand, he knows them with a knowledge of affection, and therefore will be careful of their feeding, growth, and safety. On the other side, they hear his voice, answer his call, and believe in him, and own him for their Lord and proprietor. They follow him, he calls them; they hear his voice, he knows them; they follow him, he gives unto them eternal life; a life never to perish, either by their own wills, or the wolves' violence.

Against both those, Christ in this promise as their owner secures them. Against their corruptions, they shall not perish, viz. by a corruptive principle in themselves: here he removes from them all inward causes of destruction. Against outward violence, neither shall any man, no nor devil, pluck them out of my hands, ἁρπάσῃ. By this promise he holds us safe in his own possession against the encroachments of our lusts and the rapine of the devil. They chose him for their guardian, and cast all their care upon him, and follow his conduct; and he takes care of them to give them eternal life, and to mind the weakest as well as the strongest of his sheep. He hath them in his hand. They apprehend him, and are apprehended by him, that they may attain the same end of the race with him, the resurrection of the dead, viz. a state of perfection; *If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead, not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may* καταλαβῶ *lay hold of that for which* [for which end] *I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

Apprehended, or laid hold on by Christ, a meta-

phor from those that run a race, that take hold of another to draw him after to win a prize as well as themselves. Christ lays hold on believers, and they follow him. Will Christ be easily persuaded to let go the hold of his own right? will he throw them out of his hand? That would be changeableness, and unfaithfulness after his promise. Shall any pluck them out of his hand? That would be weakness. Faith cleaves to Christ, and Christ to faith. Faith hands Christ into the heart, and gives him possession; Christ takes the heart as his own property, *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, Eph.* 3. 12. And he engages himself by promise that both he and his Father shall abide there, *John* 14. 23. Will any gracious heart cast Christ out of his lodging? He that knows the sweetness of their company, can never desire to have their room. Does Christ dwell in the heart to let sin pull his house down about his ears? Will he suffer the devil to bring in hell fire to burn up his dwelling? It is his own house, the church and every member of it, *Heb.* 3. 6. Will he not hinder the decays of it, and repair the beams and walls? Yea, the very tiles and pins? Shall he not brush down the cobwebs, and sweep out the dust? The heart is his field; will he not gather in his wheat, and burn up the tares at last?

3. Christ is a *steward* and officer, appointed by God to this purpose, to take care of every believer, and his grace. How is he the *surety of the covenant*, and of *a better testament? Heb.* 7. 22. How can it be a better testament, if it may be broken, and prove as weak as the first? He is bound for the performance of the articles of it, whereof those are the two standing parts of this agreement. *I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me, Jer.* 32. 40: that God *will not turn away from us to do us good*, and that we shall never depart from him; and our perpetual cleaving to him, depends upon his

putting his fear into our hearts, and is the end of it. This never departing, is the end why God puts his fear into our hearts. And Christ being a surety of this testament, is to look to both parts of it, that both what concerns God's part, and what concerns ours, may be made good.

PART II.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF JESUS.

His charge of his people—To redeem them—To govern them—To receive them—To perfect them—Must give an account of them—His authority—His ability—Knowledge and wisdom—His fulness—Perpetuity of his office—His faithfulness—Affection—Delight in believers—The author of grace—The example of grace—The head of the church.

HERE it is to be considered, that,

First. Christ had a *charge* from the Father to this purpose.

1. He had charge concerning what he was *to do for them.* He had a charge to redeem them, and a charge to govern them; he hath a charge to relieve them, and a charge to perfect them.

(1.) He had a charge to *redeem* them. The copy of it you may see, *That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth: to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves, Isa.* 49. 9: he was to call them out of their prisons, knock off their fetters, bring them out of darkness into marvellous light.

(2.) He had a charge to be their *governor,* which was as much in his commission, as to be their Redeemer; for *They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them; for he that hath mercy*

on them, shall lead them, even by the springs of waters shall he guide them, ver. 10: so also in *Isa.* 4. 6, where by heat &c. is meant all troubles and inconveniences in a christian life. They should not be wasted by fiery temptations, nor left in a forlorn condition. And the reason is, because that Christ, that Holy One, to whom God speaks, ver. 7, that Redeemer that called them out of a state of darkness and captivity, was to lead them in his hand, and have his eye upon them, and guide them by the springs of water, that they might have a fulness of the Spirit, and all refreshings and supplies of grace necessary for their present condition. By water, alluding to the river out of the rock, which followed the Israelites in the wilderness; and by the heat and sun, to the fiery serpents, and the plague at that time. Christ here had the conduct of those redeemed captives committed to him, and was not to rest satisfied with conferring the first grace in the conversion of them, but to provide all things for their future security, as well as their present freedom. And, *Isa.* 42, 3, when God proclaimed him his servant, this was in his commission, to have a special care of the bruised, as well as the standing reed; of the smoking, as well as the flaming flax; of the infant grace, as well as the adult; and indeed the charge is chiefly for them.

(3.) He hath a charge to *receive* them. *All that the Father gives me, shall come to me; and him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out*, *John* 6. 37. *For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me*, ver. 38. He was in no wise to cast them out; it is a meiosis, he was affectionately to entertain and welcome them. And that he might make it as firm as possible could be, he tells us it was not only his will, but his office, and that he was under a necessary as well as voluntary obedience to his Father in this case. It was a part of God's will and charge to him upon the sending him into the world, to receive very kindly any that

come to him, though the most feeble and crippled believers that came upon crutches. As he was to receive kindly those that came, so it implies, that he should receive them as often as they came; and that in any exercises of faith they should find fresh welcomes. Though their faith were very feeble, it should not be denied entertainment, but be highly caressed. So that Christ was ordered here to entertain every comer, as well as to die for them; and charged upon his obedience not to discountenance any that come, come when they will, and as often as they will.

(4.) He hath a charge also to *perfect* them; not to lose one of those God hath given him, τουτο ἐστὶ τὸ θέλημα του πεμψαντός με πατρὸς, *That of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day, John* 6. 39. This is my Father's absolute and immutable will, and he hath sent me to perform this will, that of every person he hath given, μὴ ἀπολέσω ἐξ αὐτου, *lose nothing of it*, not the meanest, weakest person, not one mite or grain of grace should be lost, *but I should raise it all up at the last day.* It was not the bare raising up, that was the charge God gave unto Christ, but the raising up to *eternal life*, ver. 40. With that perfection of holiness and grace which God expects as the end of all his dispensations; otherwise it cannot be a raising up to eternal life in such a completeness as God intended in his charge.

This charge not to lose any, but to raise them up fit to be presented unto God, without blemish, doth include all means and methods in subserviency to this end. And in this charge they are all implied to be looked after by Christ. Christ would be no friend to his Father, should he slight his Father's orders. If he should fail of being a perfect Saviour, where would be his love and obedience to God? It is as impossible for an elect person to perish, as it is for Christ, who is one with the Father, to act contrary to his Father's will. For since they are given to him,

and that on purpose to receive eternal life by him, they must be preserved; and all that which prepares them to be vessels of glory, must be secured from a total and final miscarriage, or else Christ breaks his trust, obeys his Father, and frustrates his expectations of a rest and satisfaction in him.

2. A charge which Christ must give an *account of*. Officers are to give an account of the management of the trust reposed in them; so is Christ of every believer's soul. Our Saviour is in several places called God's servant; servants are to give an account to those that employ them; and it is part of the faithfulness of a servant so to do; and Christ's faithfulness is to be glorified. He is *a merciful and faithful high priest, Heb.* 2. 17, faithful to God, as well as merciful to us, and faithful to God in being merciful to us; and by giving account of his mercy to us, he gives an account of his faithfulness to God. God expects all to be returned to him in that perfection and conformity to Christ, which he designed, when he first made the deed of gift of them to Christ. He will see whether a man be lost, by comparing the number of his sanctified ones with the names written in the book of life. Some model of this account we have; *Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me, Heb.* 2. 13. When he shall deliver up his charge, and all be numbered, he will tell his Father of his people, as he did; *Thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. They have received the words which thou gavest me, and they have believed that thou didst send me, John* 17. 6, 8. This is the confession he will make of men before God and his angels, when he delivers up the kingdom to his Father. Will Christ be found tardy in his accounts? What could he answer, if any one, given to him, should be missing? How could he say, he hath kept them in his Father's name, and lost none, if any should miscarry? as he did, *John* 17. 12, which is a copy of what will be said at the last.

Secondly. As he hath a charge, so there is a *power* conferred on him to perform that charge.

1. A power of *authority.* He hath a power over death and hell to this end; *Fear not, I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and death,* Rev. 1. 17, 18. The giving the key is a mark of authority, and is a ceremony used in investitures into office. Christ hath the keys of death and hell delivered to him by God, and he hath them to prevent the fears and unbelief of his people; for such a use he makes of them here, *fear not.* By *hell and death* are meant all kind of evils which were the bitter consequences of sin. Sin opened the mouth of death, and the gates of hell; they are the only things which can possibly prevail against a believer to hurt him. Will not Christ keep those fast locked up, never to send them out upon a believer for his destruction? And if Christ hath the keys of hell and death, he hath also power to keep his people from that state which will necessarily run them into hell and death.

All the power Christ hath given him over all flesh, is in subserviency to the performing this charge; *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,* ἐξουσίαν, *John* 17. 2. Not only a power over those given to him, to give them eternal life, but a *power over all flesh,* all the corruptions of men and devils, in order to this end of giving eternal life to every believer; *to as many as God hath given him;* so that there is not one believer, no not the weakest, but all the power God hath put into the hands of Christ over all flesh, is with a design that it should be used for his security. As if God should say, Son, look to it; if any one that I have given to thee, miss of eternal life, since I have given thee power over all flesh for their sakes, if any sinful or natural flesh deprive them of this life, it is for want of thy exercising the power I have granted thee to this purpose. Will

Christ be unfaithful not to exercise his power to the right end? No, much less will he abuse his power over all flesh to an end quite contrary to that for which it was given him. And Christ doth so exercise his power; for those righteous judgments and just reproofs of men in the world, they are for the sakes of the meek of the earth; *With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth, Isa.* 11. 4.

2. Power of *ability.* Christ had the Spirit upon him, to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, and judgment unto truth, or unto victory, *Isa.* 42. 4. This rich depositum, his jewels, laid up in the hand of Christ, are more highly valued by God than to be intrusted with a weak and feeble keeper.

Ability in respect of,

(1.) Strength to lay the *foundation* of our security. God made him strong for himself for attaining the ends he proposed; *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand: upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee, Psa.* 80. 17: the death and mediation of Christ is the strongest preservation against apostacy: God made Christ strong for his own glory, to purchase a people that should keep their standing with him, and not fall as Adam did. The effect of the hand of God being upon Christ, and the strength he had to go through in his work, was to keep his people's wills and hearts close to God. This is the issue and inference the psalmist makes of it. What might in Adam's or angels' hands miscarry, never shall in his.

(2.) *Assistance* in this business to hold his people secure. Though God gave them to Christ as his charge, yet not wholly to leave them in Christ's hand, and take no care of them himself. Though they were safe enough in Christ's hands, yet the Father, to shew his care of them, and tenderness towards them, would have the keeping of them too; and would have fast

hold as well as his Son, to assist his Son in it; *My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, John* 10. 29, 30, (greater than Christ in his office of mediation) *and no man is able to pluck them out of my hand. I and my Father are one:* God would have his hand upon them to assist Christ in it, to give him the highest security for their happiness: *I and my Father are one;* one in resolution, affection, power, ability, and consent in this business; one in holding of my sheep; we both have our hands upon them. It is strange that any should perish, that are grasped both by the Father and the Son. What power is able to do it, since the Father is greater than all, all men and devils, corruptions and temptations, and falls in with his greatest assistance to enable Christ in this business?

3. Of *knowledge and wisdom.* He is the wisdom of the Father; in him are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for the advantage of those persons designed in his commission. The all-wise God would never have put so great a concern as his own glory in his people's security, into unskilful hands, and have disparaged his own wisdom in the choice of an unfit steward. He hath the book of God's decrees delivered to him, therefore called the *Lamb's book of life,* and there he finds every name written, and he hath their *names written in heaven before him, Rev.* 21. 27: *To the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, Heb.* 12. 23. There is a commerce between Christ and his Spirit, so that by the Spirit he knows the state of every believer; their offices depend one upon another; Christ is the treasurer of grace, the Spirit the conveyer of it; he receives of Christ's, and shows it unto us; Christ knows what goes out, and he knows to whom the Spirit hands it; knows the mind of the Spirit; he searches and listens to know the Spirit's mind, what it would have, what is fit to give to the soul.

The Spirit intercedes in us, Christ intercedes for us; Christ knows the voice and mind of his own Spirit, and the Spirit knows the will of our Redeemer; for *he makes intercessions for us according to the will of God, Rom.* 8. 27. So he cannot but know our state, because he hath a faithful intelligencer, the same that is our faithful comforter, and watcheth over us to take care of us. The catalogue of the gifts he had is reckoned up; *And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, Isa.* 11. 2. All his wisdom, and knowledge, and counsel, and understanding, are managed by the fear of he Lord, which is put last, as that which is the end of all the rest, viz. faithfulness to God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom in us, and the top of wisdom in Christ: his wisdom and knowledge is to fit him for his faithfulness; *And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord,* ver. 2. in all the methods of obedience to his charge; and God gave him the *tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary, Isa.* 50. 4, i. e. that are weary under sin, and apprehensions of wrath, and power of corruptions. The wisdom God gives him is principally for this end.

4. The sufficiency of *treasure* for it. Christ hath a ministerial fulness to this end; *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, Col.* 1. 16. The issues of this fulness are our reconciliation to God, and the *presenting us holy, unblameable, and unreprovable in God's sight,* i. e. in such a state that his infinitely pure eye shall find no fault in us, ver. 20, 21, 22. These are the effects of this fulness, and therefore are the end. Though the condition be put in, ver. 23, *if you continue in the faith grounded and settled,* it doth not signify that our continuance in faith depends upon our own wills. It is frequent in

scripture to put into promises those conditions which in other places are promised to be wrought in us: so that all those promises of life upon our continuing and holding out to the end, do not weaken this, that our preservation is the effect of this fulness, because those conditions are promised in other places, and are parts of the covenant of grace, for the performance of which this fulness was given to our Saviour.

Our completeness and perfection does depend upon that fulness of the godhead which dwells in him bodily; *For in him dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily*, *Col.* 2. 9, 10. It is a ministerial fulness, whereby he is made sanctification to us as well as *righteousness*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 30. 'He is made to us sanctification, and as much sanctification, and as perfect sanctification, as righteousness, or wisdom, or redemption; so that if any of those be perfect, as our righteousness and redemption, our sanctification also shall be perfect, though it be never so weak at present. The oil first poured upon Christ's head, as well as that upon Aaron the type, runs down to the skirts of his garments, and anoints all the other members; God poured out this grace first upon Christ, and through him upon all believers.

There is as much a dependance of the grace in our hearts, not only in its birth, but in its continuance, upon this fulness of grace in Christ, as there is of light in the moon or air upon that in the sun; and there is a constant *efflux* of him to expel the darkness of sin, as there is of light from the sun to conquer the darkness in the air. And indeed were it not maintained by a constant influence of Christ's fulness, we should quickly have no more grace left, than Adam, just after his fall, and should prove as very bankrupts as the worst of sinners. The sun is not able to dry up a drop of the sea water that lies in the midst of the sand, which the sea every minute rolls upon, and preserves: neither can the flesh the least grace, while the fulness of Christ flows out upon it to supply it.

5. The *perpetuity* of this office. The continuance of Christ for ever in an unchangeable priesthood, makes him able to save to the utmost in spite of all men and devils; *But this because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood: wherefore he is able*, &c. *Heb.* 7. 24, 25; if he continues for ever in this office, he will then be for ever able to perform the business pertaining to the office, which is to save to the utmost, εις το παντελες, perfectly, both in respect of the *terminus a quo*, from which he saves; and the *terminus ad quem*, to which salvation tends; from all kind of sins and corruptions, though never so powerful: but it continues for ever; none can deprive him of his office, because none can deprive him of his life. God neither can nor will, because he hath consecrated him by an oath to be a priest or officer upon this account for ever. And this office being conferred upon him on purpose for the salvation of believers, the ends and effects of this office are of as long a continuance as the office itself: for if Christ did not perform the end of his office, it would be but an empty title: and this life which is for ever, Christ doth intend to use for the standing and perfection of the weakest grace; so that as long as that endures, the grace and happiness of a christian stands immoveable; *Because I live, you shall live also; John* 14. 19. you shall live a spiritual life here, and an eternal life hereafter; all my life shall be employed for you, to communicate a gracious life to you, and preserve it in you, till it come to be swallowed up in a life of glory with me for ever. If the spring of Christ's life fail, then, and not till then, may the stream of ours; grace cannot be destroyed while Christ's life is continued, which will be for ever; *I live for evermore, Rev.* 1. 18. A creature under the full beams of the sun, cannot be cold, till the light and heat of the sun be extinguished.

6. *Honour.* By this God encourageth Christ in this business; Christ hath his honour to this end.

Places of trust among men, are places of honour. Will Christ be careless of his own happiness and glory? He *was exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sin*, *Acts* 5. 41. The grace of repentance is only mentioned, but by consequence all the rest which accompany remission of sins, are intended. What was the reason he had so great a glory conferred upon him? Because *he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity*, *Heb.* 1. 9. *Psal.* 45. 7. Because he manifested this love and hatred, by vindicating the righteousness of God, and setting up an everlasting righteousness, and taking away iniquity. Now this disposition of loving righteousness, and hating iniquity, must needs be as powerful in him in heaven, as it was before: nay, he must needs love this disposition the better, which was the cause of so great an exaltation. And if this disposition was the reason of his advancement, should this disposition languish in him, his very advancement would decay with it. If it were the reason why he was exalted, it must then follow, that he was exalted that he might still love righteousness, and hate iniquity; and διὰ τοῦτο may imply so much; for this end, for the exercise of this, he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Since therefore this affection continues in him, is it possible he should endure to see that iniquity which he hates, prevail over that righteousness which he loves, after he hath planted one in the heart, and subdued the other? The apostle prays, *That God would fulfil the work of faith with power. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in in you*, 2 *Thes.* 1. 11, 12. The name of Christ is glorified in a believer, when the work of faith is fulfilled with power. It makes his crown shine the brighter. What hopes then have the devil and corruption, of ever regaining their former standing in a believing soul? None till the glory of Christ become vile in his own eyes.

Thirdly. As there is a charge and office given by

God to Christ, and an *ability* to perform, so there is a *compliance* of Christ with it; which appears,

1. In his *faithfulness* in the discharge of it to this end. He promiseth this; he promised it to his Father in their agreement, else he had never been sent. He promises it to us. In *John* 6. 39, there is God's charge to him, that he should lose nothing of what he had given to him, but raise it up. In ver. 40, there is his one absolute promise; *I will raise them up at the last day*, i. e. every believer; where he engageth himself to be faithful in the performance of God's will. He hath given a full evidence of it already, in finishing the work God gave him to do upon the earth; *I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, John* 17. 4. For he appeals to God for his faithfulness in this particular. And he will be no less faithful in finishing the work, which is to be yet done by him in heaven, in the behalf of his people, and their graces; for such a work he hath to do; *A finisher of faith, in his sitting at God's right hand, Heb.* 12. 2. His faithful care extends to all his subjects, even the weakest, as well as the highest believer, as God's providence doth to every creature, the lowest worm, as well as the highest angel. They are all one in Christ whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, *Gal.* 3. 8. They are all one to him, for he is faithful in the exercise of his office to every one.

2. In his *affection* to this office, besides his faithfulness, such as,

1. His stirring *compassions* to weak grace. These were great in him before the assumption of our nature; *I will send an angel before thee, for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way, Exod.* 33. 2, 3. They will give me so many provocations, that it shall be as a consuming fire; as God must needs be in a way of justice, when he treats with a sinful people himself. But I will send an angel; what angel was

this? It is called *his presence*, ver. 14. Isaiah puts them both together, *Isa.* 63. 9. and calls him *the angel of God's presence* or face. Jesus Christ the messenger of his favour; he shall go up, for he hath compassion; therefore it is said, *In his pity he redeeemed them, Isa.* 63. 9. The antithesis easily manifests this sense. He shall go up with thee, and he shall not consume thee, though thou art a stiff-necked people, because he is a mediator, and hath undertaken to satisfy my consuming justice, and being designed by assuming of your nature to be kin to you, hath compassions towards that nature, his delights are among the sons of men, For God here is considered as a judge, and the *angel of his presence* as a mediator. The government of them by Christ, is here appointed for their security, which they could not have under the immediate government of God.

His compasssions are in some sense greater now than they were then, since he hath been made like unto us, and compassed with our infirmities, and hath learned obedience (the necessity of obedience to the mediatory law) by the things which he suffered. Infirmity is the object of compasssion, and the more pressing the infirmity is, the more stirring is the pity. As God pities the more; when he *remembers they are but dust, and knows their frame, Psal.* 103, 13. 14: so does Christ know thy frame, thy believing frame, how weak it is; thy sinful frame, how strong it is; he knows thy enemies, and he knows thy indigence, and how unprovided thou art of thyself to make a stout resistance; and this awakens his compassion. As the sickly faint child hardly able to go, and not the strong one, is the object of the father's pity.

The weaker thy faith, which lies mixed with a world of strong corruptions, the more will Christ be affected with thy case, and pity that grace of his own, which suffers under them; for to this end his heart was stored with compassions to be exercised upon such

occasions. He cannot have a greater object of pity, than his own grace at the lowest ebb, nor a fitter opportunity to show what a priest he is, how merciful to man in his misery, how faithful to God in his interest, which was the end of his being *cloathed with our infirmities*, *Heb.* 2. 17. That very sin which he hates, which is a burden, a grief, a trouble to him, shall rather excite, than damp his compassion. It shall draw out his affections to thy person and thy grace, and his anger only against thy sin. If he hath any compassions in heaven, they are for those that are his own, and for that grace which he loves, when it is shot at by powerful corruptions.

(2.) A choice *love* to the weakest believers and their grace. The having a seed is the greatest article that he insisted on in his first agreement with God in this mediatory work. He was satisfied with the promises of it for all the satisfaction he was to give to God by his blood; *He shall see his seed, and the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*, *Isa.* 53. 10. 11. And in his last prayer, *John* 17, he prays more for his people and their graces, than for himself, to show that his seed lay then nearest his heart, and that his soul travailed most with them. And shall that which he had an entire affection for in the first agreement between his father and himself be slighted now after all his agonies, pains, sweat and blood to gain it? When he was in the flesh, he admired not the buildings of the temple, had no fondness for the pomp of the world or the splendor of a prince's court. No. The faith of the centurion was the matter of his wonder. That of a Canaanitish woman, and the penitent love of a converted harlot, the object of his affection. The revelation of God to babes and sucklings, the subject of his thanksgiving. He had more desire to recover a little languishing grace to its former vigour, than to preserve his life. When he was near his sentence of condemnation, he would in that extremity look back upon Peter to inspire him

with a new strength after his fall, and by rallying his scattered graces, make him victorious who had been so miserably baffled by his corrupt fears. Would it be correspondent to the sincere love of Christ, to let that which is his special favourite lie groveling in the dust, wounded to death by sin his hateful enemy?

(3.) His *delight* in believers and their graces. The very first grace acted by a new convert causes a jubilee in heaven. Christ as it were makes a feast in heaven when the *lost sheep* is found, and calls upon all the angels to congratulate with him for the recovery of it. Surely he will never have this joy turned into sorrow, these graces rifled and routed by the devil, and so give him occasion to laugh or scoff both at himself and the angels for their too forward joy. He was glad even of sad occasions contrary to his nature, when they might further the increase of a little faith. When Lazarus was dead, he was glad he was not there in the time of his sickness, to hinder the death of a friend he loved, because by his raising him again, his disciples might be confirmed in faith, and gain a greater power against their frequent doubts and unbelief; *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that you may believe, John* 11. 15.

If Paul calls the Philippians his joy and crown, because he instrumentally converted them, believers then are Christ's joy and crown, because he effectually died for them. Will Christ have his joy torn from his heart, his jewels rifled from his crown, and his crown plucked from his head? What was that joy of his which he desires of his Father to be *fulfilled in his disciples, John* 17. 13, but the sanctification of his people, which he prays for? The very discourse of the fruitfulness of his saints' graces cheers his heart; *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, John* 15. 11, i. e. that I might rejoice in you. He delights in the beauty; i. e. the graces of his queen; *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, Psal.* 45. 11. And will he not increase his own

pleasure by increasing the spiritual beauty and graces of a believer? He doth boast of believers which are his heritage; *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage, Psal.* 16. 6. And can we think he will not improve it? It must be more pleasure to enjoy it flourishing, than to possess it wasted.

And Christ does not repent of any undertaking of his for the happiness and security of his people; *I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death: O death I will be thy plague, O grave, I will be thy destruction, repentance shall be hid from mine eyes, Hos.* 13. 14. It is the speech of Christ triumphing over death. That it is meant of Christ, the word פדע, to redeem with a price, and גאל, to redeem jure affinitatis, do evince. It includes the conquest of all other enemies, as the apostle descants upon it, 1 *Cor.* 15. 55, 56, 57. Sin and the curses of the law; of this he would not repent; *repentance shall be hid from my eyes.* I will cast away any motion to it, that it shall never come more in my sight. If he rejoices in this redemption, he will also in the effects of it upon the hearts of his people. These affections are unchangeable as his office. If that be perpetual, *Heb.* 7. 24, the qualifications necessary to that office must be as perpetual as his office itself. *Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb.* 13. 8. The same in credit with his Father, faithfulness to his charge, affection to his people, ability for his office, fulness of his person, virtue of his blood, compassions to his weeping, gasping new creature, and his hatred of that which doth oppress it. And when there is such a combination in the heart of Christ, and the end of all is the good of these poor bruised reeds his believing creatures; can we think it possible, that those affections should be idle? And if they be excited, as undoubtedly they will, they will attain their ends, being all armed with a mighty power for the effecting of them.

Well then, let us act faith upon these engagements of Christ, and say with him in the Psalm, *This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death, Psal.* 48. 13, and beyond death too. It is his office to guide by his counsel here, those that he will bring to glory hereafter. Lord Jesus, direct us by thy counsel here as parts of thy charge, and bring us to glory as vessels of thy mercy to be filled with everlasting riches of grace, cherish our bruised reeds, and inflame our smoking flax.

4. The *author* of grace. He keeps this treasure in his own hands. He is so choice of it, that he never entrusted an angel to bestow it. Angels were employed to strengthen him both after his temptation and in his agony; *They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation;* but they have not the custody of that which brings them into a state of heirship. He employs none but his Spirit to be his attorney and deputy in the world to this purpose; which Spirit is sent *in his name, John* 14. 26. What it bestows, it receives from Christ, and doth it by his order; *he shall glorify me, John* 16. 14, in doing my work, for *he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you.* To his glory, and by communication from him, all the saving light in our understanding, that vital principle in our will, those supernatural impressions upon our affections, are all handed to us from Christ by the Spirit, and wrought in us by our Redeemer's order. It is all his work by his proxy.

The Father is the fountain of grace, Christ the treasurer, the Spirit the dispenser. It was his prerogative to be the author of faith, when he endured the cross and despised the shame, *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, Heb.* 12. 2, that he might thereby be the author of faith.

And he will not lose the other part of his royalty to be the finisher of it, for that is his title too, and he performs this by sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. There he sits upon a throne of grace to distribute grace upon every emergency, to finish that faith which is the weakest, and because it is the weakest, needs most assistance for its relief and perfection, and wants his greatest care for the support of it; *Let us therefore* (i. e. because *we have not a high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities) come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace*, *Heb.* 4. 15, 16, εις ευκαιρον βοηθειαν, an emphatical word καιρος, signifies season without the addition of the adverb εν in the composition. He gives out mercy from thence for the remission of sin, and dispenseth grace for a seasonable help.

It is then most seasonable, when habitual grace is weakest in itself, and its enemy strongest. If he would be the author of faith by his death, because of the joy set before him, he will be no less the finisher of it by his life, because of the joy possessed by him. This being his work since his return to glory, his care to look after both the supporting and completing, bruised and imperfect faith, is greater, because hereby he shows more of his art, (as masters reserve the completing of a work to themselves for the honour of their own skill), and manifests more of his faithfulness to God, which is more evident in the perfection of a thing, than the first draught of it. And perhaps this may be meant by that expression, *He learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*, *Heb.* 5. 8, 9. He learned by his sufferings the necessity and the acceptableness of obedience to God in this mediatory work, and therefore will not be wanting to that part of faithfulness and obedience, which is still due, in being the author of eternal salva-

vation, by his being made perfect in heaven, as he was the author of faith by his being humbled upon the earth.

And indeed that grace which he gives is eternal life, for so he calls it, *John* 17. 2, 3. What he calls eternal life, which he had power to give, he calls, ver. 3, the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ whom God had sent. The knowledge of God in Christ, a gracious affectionate knowledge of faith, spiritually to know him as sent by God, for such great ends, is faith and eternal life. Though it be but a bud in this world, subject to storms and winds, mixed with much ignorance and doubts, yet it is life, and eternal too. For there is no essential difference between *grace* and *glory*, but only in degree.

Therefore Christ saith so frequently in *John*, *I give unto them eternal life; I give;* not *I will give*, but I give at present; and he that believes *hath eternal life*, not *shall* have; for grace is a preserving principle, which shall overpower the corruptive principle of sin. If this knowledge of God in Christ, implanted in the soul, should perish, it cannot then deserve the title Christ gives it: and indeed it is not agreeable to the wisdom of God, and the honour of his Son, to cast about so much, and contrive the sending of Christ, to bestow only a perishing gift, and to let the honour and fruit of his Son's death, his gift of grace, depend upon the mutable will of man.

Well then, to be the *author and finisher of faith;* are his two titles combined together; and therefore where he is the author, he is engaged to be the finisher of the weakest grace; the smallest star receives its light, and the preservation of it from the sun, as well as that of the greatest magnitude.

5. The *exemplar and pattern* of grace. God set up Christ as the great standard or standing copy, according to which all believers should be framed and wrought just like him; *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to*

the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren, Rom. 8. 19: to *the image of his Son*, not to the image of the most glorious man that ever was in the world. Not to Enoch, that signal walker with God; nor Noah, the only loyal preacher of righteousness in his time; nor Abraham, God's friend and the believers' father. But his *own Son*, who was free from all taint of sin.

As his perfect purity made him fit to be a sacrifice to take away sin, 1 *John* 3. 5, to be an advocate to plead against sin; *Jesus Christ, the righteous*, 1 *John* 2. 1; so also to be the idea according to which all believers should be framed. Now the weakest habitual grace is an inchoative conformity to Christ as well as the strongest, and as well as that which is perfected in heaven, and hath in its own nature all the parts of that grace which is in Christ. As an infant in his body hath the lineaments of his father, as well as the grown son; *And of his fulness have all we received grace for grace*, 1 *John* 16. Grace in us suited to that grace which is in Christ, as some well express it; as the paper receives the image of every letter set in the press. The highest believer in the world was not wrought according to a more exact mode, than the lowest. The meanest branch of God's affectionate foreknowledge is conformed to Christ, and the highest cannot have a more excellent pattern. The Spirit in drawing grace in the soul, fixeth his eyes upon Christ in every line he draws, and forms the lineaments of habitual grace in some proportion to the original.

Here we are said to be *συμμορφοι*, of the same spiritual form and shape with the image of his Son. It is therefore called a *forming of Christ*, *Gal.* 4. 19. *A changing into the same image*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. *μεταμορφωμεθα*. Metamorphosed from our natural into a spiritual shape, from glory to glory, from grace, glory begun, to glory, grace perfected. There is not only the shape of Christ, as a limner draws the pic-

ture of a man, but not the intellectual or moral endowments; but in this draught of grace in some measure there is. Believers are therefore said to have *the spirit of Christ*, *Rom.* 8. 9. The same dispositions of holiness, &c. which were in Christ. The same mind which was in Christ, *Phil.* 2. 5. And to be *partakers of Christ*, *Heb.* 3. 14. Not of a part of Christ; partakers of his purchase, of his grace, of his nature; and that by faith, by *holding the beginning of our confidence*, our first ground of faith, and our first act of faith, *steadfast to the end.* And are called *his brethren*, not by the human nature, (for so all men are) but by a nature like his.

Now the end of this conformity being that Christ might have *brethren*, and *many brethren;* can we imagine he would have *one brother* among the sons of men, if this conformity to Christ were to be preserved by our own power? Certainly that tempter who would have deprived us of a Saviour, by making him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, would quickly deprive us of his image, by hurling it down from the pinnacle of our hearts, and dashing all the dirt of hell upon it: and so the end of God in this absolute will of conforming us to Christ, being thereby to make him the *first-born among many brethren*, would be frustrate. For if any one true believer, thus conformed to Christ, might totally and finally fall, then a second and third might, and all till you come to the last man of them. And if we were left to our own care, we should as certainly lose this image, as Adam did in innocency. Can we preserve our spiritual life without this constant influence of God's grace, when we cannot our natural without an uninterrupted stream of his providence? And when Adam did not will to preserve himself without the influx of God's grace preserving him in the integrity of his nature?

Well then: will Christ suffer one to perish who hath the same nature, spirit, and mind which he him-

self hath? Will he endure that his own picture limned by the art of his Spirit with the colours of his own blood, in so near a resemblance to him, that he hath not his image again in any thing in the world besides it, and this drawn for his own glory, that he might be a head among many brethren; will he suffer so excellent a piece as this to be torn in pieces, in contempt of him, either by flesh or devils?

6. As the *head* and husband of believers, by virtue of union with them. Union in all bodies is the ground of stability. There is no straiter union in the world than that of Christ to believers; it is therefore compared to all kind of unions, natural and political, to show the firmness of a believer's state upon all accounts. He is the head, believers the members; he is the root, they the branches; he the husband, they the wife. The bands of this union are on Christ's part, the Spirit; on our parts, faith and love. The greatness of the person he sends, to bind it close on his part, shows the high delight he hath in it; and shall he not as much delight in continuing this union by preserving that faith and love which knits us to him? Christ's delight shall not be quenched, nor the Spirit's operation prove fruitless.

PART III.

UNION WITH CHRIST.

Compared to a marriage union—An objection answered—The regenerate one Spirit—The strength of the soul's union to Christ—Results from communion with him—Jesus an advocate—Secures the believer's standing in grace—His progressive sanctification—Keeping the covenant firm—The support and happiness of the believer—Christ pleads for every believer in particular—The favour of his intercession—Prevalence of it.—The ground of it—The office of the Spirit—His mission—His titles.

THAT Christ is the head, and husband of every believer, by virtue of union with them, will further appear by showing what kind of union this is.

1. It is a marriage union, and as a natural union of head and members. Both are discoursed on together by the apostle; *He that loves his wife, loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, Eph.* 5. 28, 29, 30. Where exhorting husbands to love their wives, he sets Christ as a copy to enforce it upon them. And ver. 32, he seems to intimate, that his whole discourse, wherein he be-

gan to speak of the love of Christ to the church, from ver. 25, did refer to this, *No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it*, εκτρέφει, provides for it, and θάλπει, clothes it, and beautifies it, and defends it against the injuries of the weather. So doth Christ nourish the graces of his people, and protects them against the temptations of Satan. What prince would without resistance see a traitor wrest his beloved queen from his arms, and cut her throat?

The apostle from this passes to mix both those unions together, and illustrates one by the other: *We are members of his body, of his flesh, &c.* ver. 30, alluding to Eve's being taken out of Adam's side. And not only the church in general, but every believing member: *We are members of his body;* we believers, and every one of us. It being thus, it is impossible Christ can do any other than nourish and cherish his own body, and every member of it, his own spouse. For in doing so, he loves himself, ver. 28. as a head, as a husband, his mystical self and his own honour, which is concerned in his spouse. *No man ever yet hated his own flesh.* Whatsoever is implanted in our nature as a perfection of it, is eminently in God; now since he hath twisted with our nature a care of our own bodies, this care must be much more in the nature of Christ, because he hath a higher affection to his mystical body that we can have to our natural; for he is set here as the exemplar; and originals are always more excellent than the copied draughts.

Would not every man improve both the beauty and strength of his own body, take care to preserve it from wounds, and to heal them when they are received, and not suffer the flesh to be mangled, unless it be for the security of the whole? This would be a hatred of his own flesh, which never any man in his right wits was guilty of. Shall Christ then let spots always defile his body, and wounds putrify it for want of curing? Shall he let sin within, and the devil without, gnaw, slash, and cut his members, and stand by un-

concerned? Will he suffer the least member of his body to be torn from him by his enemies? Shall our affectionate Redeemer, that hath taken upon him to be our head, and to cause this union, and delights in it, be the first that should do such an unnatural act, and be worse natured to his body, than the wickedest man in the world is to his? Men do not use to cut off a finger for every wart or wen, or for every wound that hath putrefaction in it. Christ does not cut off believers for their infirmities, he would then cut off his own members. Men rather use diseased parts with more tenderness, because they stand in more need of it.

Christ therefore will much more cherish the afflicted part, and chase the disease away. Certainly believers being members of his body, he must naturally care for their state, especially for that grace which is the band of union, and the vital spirit in all his members. Will he ever suffer that to decay for want of food? Christ hath not only the name, but the affection of a head; and it is his office by union, (and not only so, but his nature) as well as his Father's charge, to be careful of the preservation of his members. Shall he feel what is done against his people by persecutors? And will he not be much more sensible of what the flesh, that grand tyrant and persecutor of his people's graces, doth against his body, as well as what the lesser and more extrinsical enemies execute?

Objection. But if it be said, that there is no doubt of Christ's faithfulness to us while we continue faithful to him; but we may cast off Christ from being our husband; and we being not natural, but mystical members, may cut off ourselves.

Answer. Against this the covenant secures; *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me, Jer.* 32. 40. The fear he hath put into our hearts, keeps us from ever departing from him. Be-

sides, there is a stronger stay; *God will not turn from us, to do us good,* even the highest good, all the good he can. God stores us with habitual grace, and stands by it. It is God's keeping close to us, secures us from turning our backs upon him. Again, Christ's love to keep, is armed with gracious omnipotency to effect it, which no husband in the world hath over his wife, nor any man over any members of his body.

2. It is so strong a union *intensively,* that Christ and a regenerate man become *one spirit. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,* 1 *Cor.* 6. 17, κολλώμενος, glued. One spirit, as if they had but one soul in two bodies. What the Spirit doth in Christ, it doth also in a believer, according to the capacity of his soul. The same Spirit which was the immediate conveyer of grace to the human nature of Christ, is so to us. Christ had an essential holiness in respect of his godhead, but a derivative holiness as man. And this derivative holiness proceeded from the Spirit in him *without measure,* which we have in our measures. And by virtue of this union, by the *same spirit* whereby you become *one spirit* with Christ, not only that grace which is in you and the greatest apostle, are the same; but that grace which is in you and our great Mediator the man Christ Jesus, are of the same nature and original: as the light of the sun, and the light of a star, are the same, but they differ in degrees, not essentially: and as we say of souls, *animæ sunt pares dignitate:* though the actions are not the same, because of the indisposition of the organs, and the predominancy of some particular humour. It is the same Spirit in Christ and a believer, as it is the same soul in dignity, which is in an infant and a man of the most refined parts. It is more here, for it is the same Spirit in respect of his person, which makes Christ very near of kin to us. The Spirit must either desert Christ, or us, before this union can be dissolved. Not Christ, for he had it in the world

not by measure; and he is yet anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Not us, because the promises of Christ cannot be broken. This being the top-stone of the comfort of believers, in sending this Comforter, that he was to abide for ever.

(3.) This union of the soul to Christ, is *strengthened* by the union of Christ to the Father. *I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one,* εἰς ἕν, *into one, John* 17. 23. First, the Father in Christ, and then Christ in believers. So that whatsoever fulness, strength, grace, the Father gives to Christ by virtue of his union with him, and which is communicable to his members, the same hath the soul by virtue of its union with Christ. And both these unions, that of the Father with Christ, and that of Christ with us, are for the perfection of all those that should be with him to the end of the world, even the weakest as well as the strongest; for it refers to ver. 20. But we must understand this, not of that essential union between the Father and the Son, as they are one essence, but of the union of the Father to Christ as Mediator, in respect of the Father's influence upon him, and assistance of him.

Christ being the *medium* of our union with God, both the Father's union with him, and his with us, are for our perfection. Because whatsoever grace Christ hath, by virtue of his union with the Father, is to be communicated to us according to our capacity, or employed for us according to our necessity. And from this union it is, that God loves believers as he loved Christ; *That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me,* ver. 23. Christ himself made no question but the Father loved believers as he loved him their head, *amore similitudinis* not *æqualitatis;* but Christ would have the world know it, and themselves know it too, and therefore would have them sanctified, and at last perfected. From this passage, I think, this will plainly follow, that as Christ cannot miscarry because of his union

with the Father, whereby he hath a continual influence from him; so neither can a believer by virtue of his union with Christ, which invests him in the same love which the Father bears to Christ.

Methinks the apostle refers to this passage, *Our life is hid with Christ in God, Col. 3. 3.* Our life is hid with Christ by virtue of our union with him, as Christ is in God by union with the Father. Christ in God, and our life in Christ. The flesh then, and the devils, may as well pull God out of heaven, and overthrow the security of Christ and pull him from the right hand of the Father, as rob a true believer of his spiritual life, or pull grace, which is Christ formed in the heart, out of the soul of a new creature.

(4.) From this union with Christ, results a *communion* with him, which secures grace in a believer's heart. A communion with him in his death, and from thence a perfection. So the apostle argues; *If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed,* &c. *Rom. 6. 5, 6.* If we are planted with him in the likeness of his death, for the destruction of the body of sin, we shall grow up with him in the likeness of his resurrection, for the perpetual life of grace. For by our dying with him we are freed from sin; i. e. from serving sin, and yielding up ourselves to it. And this communion in his death, will introduce a communion with him in his life. *Therefore as Christ being raised again, dies no more,* ver. 8; so a christian being regenerate and raised from a death in sin (which spiritually answers to the resurrection of the body of Christ) cannot spiritually die again, ver. 9, 10, 11. For Christ formed in the heart, dies no more there, than Christ exalted in heaven doth.

And after an exhortation, that they should not obey sin in the lusts thereof, whereby he shows what this communion with Christ in his resurrection is, not a

total present freedom from sin, but a not obeying sin in its lusts and motions, not reverencing the commands of it, as if it were our Lord, not yielding ourselves to its service, but to the service of God, ver. 12, 13, (which is a good comment upon those places, which some have made an erroneous use of, and from which they do at this day cry up an *absolute perfection* in this life, 1 *John* 3. 9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God,* 1 *John* 5. 18. He cannot morally, because of the seed of God, and strong habit of grace fed by union to, and communion with Christ.) I say, after this exhortation, this is the final inference the apostle makes; *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace,* ver. 14; i. e. by virtue of your being in the covenant of grace, united to the Mediator of that covenant, who as surety hath satisfied the law for you, and brought it about that you are no more under the law, but under grace.

And having a communion with him in his death and resurrection, you are in the same stable state *inchoatively* as Christ himself is, and you will be at last perfectly so in heaven. For that is the strength of the apostle's reasoning, as you will find on perusing that chapter at your leisure, viz. to show that it was impossible that any one that was in the covenant of grace, should abuse that grace to a licentiousness in sin, and a devoted affection to it, because if he had been once planted into that likeness of Christ's death, he is freed from sin, and will be planted in the likeness of Christ's resurrection; and therefore it will be impossible for him to be under the reign of sin. And to encourage them to keep up their standing against sin, he assures them, that *sin shall have no dominion over them:* as nothing makes a man fight more courageously in a battle, than to be sure of victory. Union cannot be without communion. For while the members are united to a living sound head,

there will be an influx of animal spirits, whereby they shall partake of life and motion. The spirit from our mystical head will be working in us, providing for us, and standing by us for our preservation.

Well then: sum up this together, that this union is a marriage union, and that thereby we become the body of Christ, yea, and are acted by the *same spirit*; add the union of the Father with Christ as well as that of Christ with us; and the communion both of his death and resurrection resulting from this union; and if those be not strong enough to hold and secure a true believer though he hath but little strength, he may then, and not till then, totally and finally fall away.

7. An *advocate* of grace in respect of his intercession. Christ's office being that of an advocate, doth ascertain this truth. An advocate is so to plead his client's right, that he may gain the victory over his adversary in the suit. Christ being an advocate that always entertains a good cause, will certainly so manage it, that grace shall at length prove victorious.

(1.) The concerns of grace are *the principal subject* of his intercession.

[1.] Our *standing* in grace. Our first access by faith is the immediate fruit of his death in reconciling us. But our actual salvation, and all the methods of it, are the fruits of his life! *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, Rom. 5. 2.

The apostle in that verse mentions three things. 1. Our access by faith. 2. Our standing in this grace, whereunto we have access. 3. Our joy in the hopes of all the fruits of it. All which are ascribed not only to his death, but to his life, and the two last principally to that, ver. 10. 11. By his death he takes away the partition wall between God and us, built on our parts by sin, and on God's part by the hand of justice. By his life he preserves this access

free and open, and secures the wall from ever being built up again to hinder our access; which would be, if sin should prevail, for if sin builds it on our part, justice could not but re-build it on God's part, were it not for the life of Christ, which doth as much maintain our standing, as his death did work our reconciliation, otherwise the apostle could not have put a *much more* to it.

For by this life of Christ we can *joy in God* as our friend, who was formerly our enemy; because by Christ thus living, *we receive the atonement;* i. e. it is continually applied to us, *by whom we have now received the atonement*, ver. 11, ἐλάβομεν *Aorist.* just now, the fruits of the atonement; and by this constant application of the atonement, our standing is secured with joy; for in receiving the atonement made by his death from him now living, we receive all the other fruits of his purchase. Hence he is said to prepare heaven for us, i. e. by keeping up the favour of God towards us, that when we come we may have the kindest reception, just as he doth make us meet below for the inheritance of the saints in light by his Spirit.

[2.] Our *progress* in sanctification. The keeping his seed from the evil, and preserving of them, is the main matter of all that prayer; *Keep them from the evil, John* 17. 15; ἀπὸτου πονηρου: from the devil, the head of sin, from all sorts of evils; evils within and evils without; which implies not only a desire negatively, that they might not be hurt by evil, but also that they might overcome it, and be improved by it. And that no believer should be discouraged, and think himself out of Christ's thoughts, he presents to his Father the whole generation of them to *the end of the world,* ver. 20. He holds up here all his seed, as it were, in his hand, as those to whom he would have those petitions then put up, answered in time, to every one of them, weak and strong, to the very last man that should give up his name to him; every one

that should believe through the apostle's word; their word ministerially, because committed to them to be delivered down by them from age to age.

So that the *same* gospel being now preached in the world, and producing the fruit of faith in any soul, entitles him to the benefits of this prayer. In his recovery of Peter by his prayer on earth, he sets a pattern of what he would do for all his people in heaven; *But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren, Luke* 22. 32: which is evidenced by those words, *When thou art converted, &c.* Tell them, that the rallying of thy routed faith, was by the prevalency of my prayer; and that they may expect the like from me in their temptations: that their faith shall not fail, but rather get a surer standing, as indeed Peter's did, who though he so shamefully denied his master under the power of the temptation, yet was the most forward afterwards to confess him in the teeth of his adversaries. As Paul's conversion was a pattern to after-ages of the power of his grace for the turning the most giant-like sinners, so was this a pattern of the force of his intercession for the preservation and further sanctification of oppressed believers. These words, strengthen thy brethren, would be of little force if it were not a leading case, and that Christ intended to make it a rule of court for the comfort of his people that are like Peter, having the revelation of Christ from God, and not from flesh and blood.

3. The keeping the covenant *firm* in both the parts of it, as the foundation of both these. Therefore in the solemn appearance of God in prophetic visions, relating to the gospel dispensation, both before the manifestation of Christ, and since, the throne of God is encircled with a rainbow. But the place I would consider is; *And their governor shall proceed from the midst of them, and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that*

engageth his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord? and you shall be my people, and I will be your God, Jer. 30. 21, 22. God causeth Christ to draw near, and gives him a power of mediating: *I will cause him to draw near.* Christ accepts it, *he shall approach unto me;* Who? *Their governor* that *shall proceed from the midst of them.* God then breaks out into a delightful astonishment at this approach of Christ to him as a surety and advocate, so that he gives out all blessings upon his asking, *Who is this that hath engaged his heart?* ערב את־לבו hath pledged his heart, hath become a *surety in his heart;* the word is used and translated, *Gen.* 44. 30. ערב את־הנער Thy servant hath *become a surety for the lad*; and likewise, *if thou be surety for thy friend, Prov.* 6. 1.

This is that which makes the covenant firm, and preserves the knot between God and us. *You shall be my people, and I will be your God,* ver. 22: I understand it of the mediation of Christ in general, but with a particular application to his intercession, as being a great part of that mediation, and the principal, if not the only continued act of it. Now as long as those engagements of his heart, those affections remain, he hath liberty as a surety to approach to God, which he will always have; and as long as God delights in it, as here he doth even to admiration, so long shall believers be God's people, and he their God. Certainly such an answer doth Christ receive upon every act of his intercession, even a covenant-answer: God saith, that poor weak believing soul whom thou dost plead for, shall be mine, one of my people, and I will be his God, and I will do what thou wilt for him.

(2.) His intercession seems to be appointed by his father for this end, the *support and happiness* of those that believe in him: which appears not only in that forementioned place of Jeremiah, wherein God would cause him to approach to him for the keeping of the

covenant stable between God and his people; but in *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, Psal.* 2. 8; which is Christ's patent for this office of advocate; and granted him after his resurrection, intimated in those words, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. As Christ did not die for himself, or rise again for himself, but as a public person; so he hath this power of asking, and promise of receiving upon asking, as a public person, as a king and governor, as he is styled, and as he is *set king upon his holy hill of Sion, Jer.* 30. 22. i. e. king in the church. If he had then this grant of asking, as a public person, and as king in his church; it must then be employed for those who are his church, his voluntary subjects, those for whom he died and rose again.

If his asking were designed as a means to come to the possession of his inheritance, the possession of the Gentiles, by the same reason it is also designed as a means for the improvement of his inheritance. For those that are chiefly his heritage in the world, his garden in the wilderness, so pleasant to him, *Psal.* 16. 6, that if he can make it more pleasant for asking, he will not stick at it, and God will do it for him. For the large promise made him, implies both the preservation and improvement of his inheritance, to make it comfortable to him. This power of asking was chiefly designed for believers, as appears by the use the psalmist makes of it; of exhortation to the powers of the world, ver. 10, 11. to serve him; but of exultation in the latter end of ver. 12. to believers, *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.* If it were not designed by God for them, and for every one of them (all they), and to be employed for them chiefly, they would be no more blessed than others. And this blessedness doth consist in justification and sanctification; for *Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven, Psal.* 32. 1, and

Christ blesseth us *by turning us away from iniquity, Acts* 3. *ult.*

(3.) Christ asks this blessing of grace in particular, *for every believer in particular*, which still adds a strength to this truth. Christ's living for ever to make intercession for us, is the reason rendered why he is able to save to the utmost, *Heb.* 7. 25, it is εἰς τὸ παντελὲς ad omnimodam perfectionem, so Camero. Perfection of parts here, perfection of degrees hereafter. If he lives for ever to make intercession for the perfect salvation of his people, he consequently intercedes for all those things which may promote the perfection of their salvation, and consequently for their graces, which are necessary to it. Therefore the habit of grace shall be actually and perpetually preserved, otherwise Christ's intercession would be in vain. And this he doth in particular for every believer. They were given to him in particular, they come to God by him in particular, and he saves them in particular; therefore he intercedes for them in particular, even for all those that come unto God by him. As they come, he intercedes for them; As a great master of requests he receives the petitions of every comer, and presents their particular cases to his Father with a good and powerful word of his own: So he prayed for Peter in particular; *I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, Luke* 22. 32.

It is probable Christ prayed for all; it seems to be implied; Satan had an aching tooth at every one of them; Εξητήσατο he hath earnestly *desired you to sift you as wheat.* He prayed particularly for their faith, that it might not be conquered; because this being the fundamental grace, if this stands all the rest keep up their heads. His intercession is for every thing which may preserve, and against every thing which may destroy. Not only for the preservation itself, but for the particular means of it; *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth, John* 17. 17. Do it by thy word; where he intercedes for the

keeping up a gospel in the world, in subserviency to this end, viz. their sanctification. Do it by thy truth, that incorruptible seed, that eternal gospel, eternal in the duration of the effects of it; so that thy standing, and all the means of it, the habit and the very acting of thy faith, the impressions made upon thy soul by any particular truth, are the fruits of Christ's intercession. I cannot imagine that a person that Christ does in so particular a manner intercede for in all his concerns, can fall totally and finally.

(4.) He intercedes more *fervently* (if there be any degrees at all in his affection in heaven above what he had here) in heaven, than he did upon the earth. If he upon the earth prays so earnestly to his father to keep them, and that a little before his death, when the sorrows of death and the grave, the contest he was to have when his fathers's wrath began to stare him in the face, when he had a foresight of all those bruises his soul was shortly to suffer, which, if any thing, might reasonably divert his thoughts, and damp his affections from praying for others; when he hath conquered all this, and hath no more death to suffer, no infirmity of the flesh to clog him, not the least eclipse of his fathers's countenance so dreadfully to groan under; he will rather be more fervent than cold in his suit. Shall he pray against the indulged sins of his enemies under the anguish of death, and not against the lamented and troublesome corruptions of his friends in the triumphs of glory; shall he pray for his murderers under the horror of his father's wrath, and not plead for the support of his people's graces in the arms of his Father's love? Hath he not more encouragements to plead strongly for them, since he sits upon a throne of grace, than when he suffered upon a cross by justice?

He stood at his death as a guilty person charged with the guilt of others, but in heaven he pleads as a righteous advocate freed from all that guilt, which was then charged upon him. Hath he not more engage-

ments? Shall not the esteem of his purchase, the value of his Father's gift, honour of his conquest, consent of his people, credit of his office, obedience to his Father's charge, elevated affection, delight in his people's graces, care of his image, relation of a husband, straitness of union, shall not all these inflame his Spirit with a zeal in his plea beyond the power of a control, were there a possibility of any?

(5.) His intercession now must be every jot as *prevalent, if not more, than his prayer upon earth.* If he prevailed at the tribunal of God's justice by his satisfaction, which was the sharpest conflict he could ever enter into, shall he not much more prevail at the throne of God's grace by his intercession? If his death were powerful to procure a perfect righteousness for our justification, his intercession will keep pace with it to apply that, and perfect grace for our sanctification. Will not Christ be successful in one as well as the other, and as good at finishing the work in heaven, as he was at finishing his work on earth? Especially when his finishing his work on earth is the foundation of the continuance of that work of his intercession, being first a propitiation, and then an advocate. It will certainly produce as perfect effects for the perfection of the weakest believer, as his death upon the cross did for his reconciliation; which is to *present us holy, unblameable, and unreproveable in God's sight*, 1 *Col.* 22.

How strongly grounded his intercession in heaven is, and what arguments he doth use; *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee; holy Father, keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name, those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the Son of perdition. I am no more in the world,* corporally, *but those are in the world, John* 17. 11, 12. I shall leave those behind me in a world of temptation and

misery. I come to thee. I shall shortly ascend to thee. Now, holy Father keep through thy name, &c. Here we have.

1. God's *relation* to himself, and to his people. *Father*, not *my holy Father*. The relation reaches not only to the intercessor, but the persons pleaded for. Christ in heaven pleads with God as a Father, his Father, our Father.

2. God's *holiness*. *Holy Father*. Not merciful, powerful Father, or righteous Father, as afterwards. Grace is an image of God's holiness, and therefore is the most proper attribute of God to be used as an argument for the preservation of it.

3. The *gift* of God; keep those *whom thou hast given me;* which he urgeth twice. Thou gavest them me to redeem and sanctify, not wholly to part with them, but to be presented to thee again in a better state. I had never had them but by thy donation. Thou didst not give them to me that they might perish, but that they might be kept; keep therefore thy own gift, that they may be returned to thee in a better state. Thou gavest them me, and they are still thine, neglect not thy own, because thou art immutable in thy counsel and affection.

4. The *end* why God gave them to Christ. *That they may be one as we are*; ἵνα the causal particle may refer either to δέδωκας or τήρησον. If the end, Father, why thou didst give them to me, was that they might be one, as we are, keep them therefore till they attain this end in perfection, that thy aim may not be frustrated.

5. God's *past preservation* of them; *I have kept them through thy name.* Though I have been in the world with them, and have kept them, it was through thy strength; and in my present petition, I desire no greater a strength than what already thou hast exerted for their preservation.

6. His *own obedience* to God? *Those whom thou gavest me, I have kept.* He lays a stress upon God's

donation, and his own faithfulness. I have been obedient to thee in the keeping of them, because they were thy gift. Wilt thou command me to keep that which thou thyself wilt neglect and slight? Wilt thou be careless of that charge thou gavest me such strict orders to preserve? Shall my faithfulness to thee in that charge outstrip thy mercifulness to them, and care of their standing?

7. The *success* of his care; *none of them is lost.* This charge thou gavest me, not to lose any, I have hitherto performed it. Not one son of election, but only that of perdition, which was given to me as my attendant, not my charge. The but, or εἰ μὴ, doth not weaken this assertion of Christ. As Camero and others observe, Εἰ μὴ is not by way of exception, but opposition. He was not of the number of those given to Christ, but of another rank and society: *A man is not justified* εἰ μὴ, *but by the faith of Jesus Christ, Gal.* 2. 16, where faith is set in opposition to works in justification. Not at all by works; but only by faith; *Of that day and hour knows no man, no not the angels in heaven, but* εἰ μὴ *my Father only, Matt.* 24. 36. The Father is set in opposition to men and angels, not excepted as either man or angel; so Judas here is set in opposition to those that were given to Christ, not excepted as a lost part of that number. I have been the larger in it, that it may serve for a little use of what hath been spoken. It will be a good pattern of prayer; arguments may be fetched from those topics so far as will suit us to plead with God in our case, and there is scarce any of these considerations which have been delivered, but may be turned into an argument in prayer.

Now to sum up all this. Doth Christ plead for our standing in grace, and progress in sanctification, and live for this end? Did he set Peter up as a pattern of what he would do in this case? Is the covenant kept firm by his mediation, and covenant answers procured by his intercession? Is it appointed

by God for this very end, viz. the blessedness of his people? Doth he present every man's case in particular, and intercede for his grace in particular, and what truth shall make impressions on him? Is there some reason to think he is more fervent in it now, than he was upon the earth? to be sure no less. Are the arguments he uses very strong? Then the standing even of the weakest grace is sure. Before that can fall, God must change his end in giving his Son power to ask, Christ must leave pleading, or his arguments must lose their strength. But as Ambrose said to Monica concerning Austin, who remained in his natural condition, notwithstanding his good education, and his mother's prayers, It is impossible that a son of so many prayers should perish; so may I say of grace, it is impossible a child of so many, so fervent, so powerful intercessions in all circumstances, can ever either totally or finally perish.

Thirdly. The *Spirit* is engaged in this business. The reason why God puts his Spirit into the heart, is to preserve us *from departing from him*, *Jer.* 32. 40. As Christ was true and faithful to God in the end of his coming; so will the Spirit be faithful to God in the end of his being put into the heart. It is the same Spirit, which being upon Christ, enabled him to the performance of his charge, *Isa.* 11. 1, 2, and made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, to establish him in faithfulness and obedience to God in his mediatory work. The same Spirit is in us to establish us in the fear of God, to keep that principle of God's fear put into our hearts, alive. And as the Spirit performed his office fully upon the human nature of Christ, so it will not be deficient in us according to our measure. Consider the Spirit every way, and this work of preserving grace will appear to be his business. What Christ does by his proxy, may well be interpreted to be his own act.

1. His *mission*. If Christ were not to break the bruised reed, surely no messenger sent by him is to

do it. The Spirit is sent by the Father in his Son's name, *John* 14. 26. He is sent by Christ from the Father, *John* 15. 26, with his Father's consent and commission. There is a conjunct authority, sent by commission from both, sent to supply Christ's place upon earth. Christ's business in part was to keep his people, and he wanted one to do it after his departure. Therefore prays his *Father to keep them in his name, John* 17. 11. In answer to this prayer the Spirit is sent. Therefore sent by the Father and Son in subserviency to this end of preserving his people, and comes himself with an intention to answer this end, and perform the covenant. If both concur in sending him, his mission must be in order to the fulfilling what was agreed upon by the three persons, and more particularly by the Father and Son in the mediatory covenant; for they would never send one that should go contrary to the covenant they were engaged in.

2. His *titles.* He is called,

(1.) A *comforter, John* 14. 16. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter. *The comforter* κατ ἐξοχην: such another comforter as I have been unto you, and in some respect better, a more spiritual comforter. It was expedient that Christ should go away, that this comforter might come; *Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you, I tell you the truth, John* 16. 27. I must deal plainly with you; I have a great desire the comforter should come, and *if I go not away, he will not come.* Intimating thereby, that it was a greater blessing to have the comforter with them, than Christ in person. What comfort could they have in this declaration, and what expediency in it, if the Spirit did not mind the same end in keeping and preserving us as Christ did? It had been no ways expedient; better a thousand times Christ had never gone, and the comforter never come, if it were not for the same

end which Christ minded in the world. The ends of Christ were to give the *oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified, Isa.* 61. 3. As this was the work of Christ, so this is the work of the Spirit as a comforter, to make the heart grow up in fruit to the glory of God.

(2.) An *abiding* comforter. *That he may abide with you for ever, John* 14. 86; he must abide with us in the capacity wherein he is sent, i. e. as a comforter. His comfort would signify little, if it did not meet with the main trouble which pesters us; i. e. the fear of miscarrying, and not continuing to the end. O I am afraid that this little spark may be quenched by the floods cast out of the dragon's mouth, that this little faith may be wounded to death by some strong temptations. I doubt it will quickly gasp its last; I have but a little oil in the cruse, it will soon be wasted, and I shall die. These kind of thoughts every believer has more or less. The chosen vessel and the greatest instrument for God that ever was, found such fears prevailing in him; *I keep under my body, lest that by any means I myself should be a cast-away,* 1 *Cor.* 9. 27.

The Spirit therefore must be a comforter to mate this grand trouble, and melt this gloomy cloud which doth so often darken the strong, as well as the weak believer. And truly every one's experience can testify, that when such thoughts do creep up, some hopes also start up with them from the Spirit, like a covenant rainbow with a shower; and one thing which, as a comforter, he is to convince the world of (and the best part of the world too, even those that are convinced of unbelief, sinfulness, and the necessity and sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ) is, that the prince of this world is judged and condemned, his works dissolved, and that he shall never more have power over believers to ruin them, *John* 16. 11. He

is to abide with us to that end and purpose for which he came into our hearts; and that was to bring us to God, therefore his abiding with us is to keep us with God.

If our first conversion were the work of the Spirit, and our standing in it our own, we should be more beholden to ourselves than to the Spirit, because a good condition stable, is a greater blessing than a good condition mutable. If the Spirit stand only as a careless spectator, to see how we would steer our course, without putting his hand to the helm, what good would his abiding with us do? If a man have a great business to do, the presence of a multitude of men doth him no good, unless he hath assistance from them. By the Spirit's abiding with us, is meant, not the remaining of his person without his operations. As when God promises to be present with us, he does not mean his essential presence, for that cannot but be present whether he promiseth it or no; but his gracious presence. The Spirit abides with believers not only in moving them, for so he abides with wicked men, but efficaciously moving, not only in their first conversion, but in their growth and progress.

PART V.

THE INSTRUCTION TO BE DERIVED FROM THE SUBJECT.

The regenerate cannot finally apostatize—The operations of grace may be interrupted—The comforts of it may be suspended—Relative grace cannot be lost—The habit of inherent grace cannot be lost—The opposite doctrine makes void all the promises of God—The designs of the promises—The promises made to Christ—It frustrates the comfort of the promises—Dishonours the love of God—The wisdom of God—The power of God—It makes God uncertain of his objects—Subjects the grace of God to the will of man—Frustrates the design and fruits of election—The design of the work of Christ—The work of the Spirit—The certainty of perseverance, and final salvation.

THE Use of the subject is, Matter of information. Of comfort. Of duty.

This subject, *First*, affords important instruction.

1. The doctrine of the possibility of a total and final apostacy of a regenerate man after grace infused, *is not according to truth.* You see upon what pillars the doctrine we have asserted, stands. Whence it

follows, that the contrary doctrine of the apostacy of a regenerate man, is against the whole tenor of the covenant of grace, against the attributes of God engaged in it and about it, against the design of Christ the Mediator of it, against the charge committed to him, against the end of the Spirit's mission and abiding with us.

The question then may be thus stated: whether that vital principle or habit of grace put into the heart by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost at the conversion of the soul, be not *perpetually preserved and cherished* by the same Spirit, so that it never dies? And that therefore a regenerate man endued with this vital principle, neither can nor will, by reason of this implanted and inworking grace of the Spirit, fall from faith, and serve sin, so as to give himself up wholly to the command of it. The question is not, whether we shall persevere if grace doth continue, as the contrary minded assert, and accordingly gloss upon the scriptures alleged for it. Such a question would be ridiculous. It is as much as to ask whether a man shall live to-morrow if his life remain in him? Or whether the sun shall shine to-morrow if its light continues? And is as much as to say, a man shall persevere if he does persevere. But whether the habit of grace, the fear of God, faith, the new creature, new man, or howsoever you will term it, be not so settled in the soul as that it shall never be totally removed? Some affirm that it may. Satan was of this persuasion (though he hath since discovered himself more orthodox) when he tells God to his face, *Put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face, Job* 1. 8, 9, 10, 11, that smart afflictions would divest Job of that uprightness God so signally applauded in him, as a non-such in all the earth. The chief ground is, that they lay all, both conversion and preservation, upon the will of man, not grace.

I shall therefore lay down, I. Some propositions for explaining it. And it is acknowledged that,

1. The operations of grace may be *interrupted.* As long as there are two laws, one of sin in the members, another of grace in the mind; as long as there are two principles in a grand contest, flesh and spirit; as long as our knowledge is imperfect, and our love but of a weak growth, the operation of both cannot be perfecter than the nature of their principle. The vigour of our gracious actions is often enfeebled by the power of the flesh, that we do many times that evil we hate, and omit that good we love. And we cannot deny but that our acts flow oftener from a corrupt than a renewed principle. Yea, and those actions which flow from grace, are so tinctured with the vapours of the other principle, that they seem to partake more of the impressions of the law of sin, than of the law of the mind. So that our perseverance is not to be measured from the constant temper of our actions, but from the permanency of the habit. The acts of grace may be suspended by the prevalency of some sinful distemper, as the operations of the natural life are in an epileptic or apoplectic paroxysm. Hence it is that we find David so often praying for quickening grace, according to the promise, upon a sense of the flagging of his grace.

2. The *comfort* of our grace may be eclipsed. We may lose the sense of it without losing the substance. An actual communion may be lost upon a sinful fall, till actual repentance, when the union is not unloosed. A benumbed member is knit to the body, though it hath not its wonted vigour, and active heat. Mutual comfort may be suspended between man and wife, though the conjugal knot be not dissolved. Believers may be separated from Christ's smiles, but not from their relation to Christ, and being in him. Comfortable interest may be interrupted, when radical interest receives no damage. A leper

under the law was hindered of actual enjoyment of his house, but not deprived of his legal title to it.

3. *Relative* grace cannot be lost. Every regenerate man, being the Son of God by a double title, that of regeneration and adoption, can never cease to be his Son. The relation of a son to a father is indissoluble. It can never be, that he that is once a son can become no son: the relation is firm, though the affection may be on both sides extinguished. The relation we have to God, as his children, is knit with that other of heirs. The apostle made no doubt of the truth of that consequence; *If children, then heirs, and heirs of God, Rom.* 8. 17. And he was afterwards of the same mind; *And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ, Gal.* 4. 7. If it be objected: true, unless a believer disinherit himself by an undutiful and contemptuous carriage. But he cannot, unless he should cease to be a creature. For the same apostle as positively affirms in a triumphant manner, that no other creature, under which believers themselves are comprehended, can separate from the love of God; *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, &c. nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom.* 8. 38, 39. And the other apostle comes in as a witness, that a Son of God, so born, can never be guilty of such a contemptuous carriage habitually, as may end in a disinheriting of him, because the seed of God, whereby he was born, remains in him, as the band of his relation; *His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God,* 1 *John* 3. 9. His being born of God is the rock against the flood of sin, because he is born of God, and makes it eternally true, that such an one is the Son of God. Who ever did, or ever will, hear of a son of God by those two titles in hell? It seems not congruous to divine wisdom, to make any his heirs, that he saw he should disinherit. No wise man would do so, if he were

conscious of all future events, and did sincerely adopt a person. And shall the all-wise God be represented weaker than man?

4. The *habit* of inherent grace cannot be lost. A believer has eternal life in actual possession in the seed, and in reversion in the harvest, *John* 6. 54. It is plain; *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 23. It is called an incorruptible seed in opposition to corruptible, both in its own nature, and the effects produced by it. But this seed of the word being incorruptible, raises effects according to its nature. The antithesis is express, we are not born of corruptible seed, which is of a perishing nature, but of an *incorruptible* seed. The seed of our regeneration is incorruptible; the word, the instrument, is unchangeable; the Spirit, the efficient cause which manages the word, and thereby infuseth the seed, abides for ever. All these causes agreeing in one attribute of incorruptible, must needs produce an effect suitable to the nature of them. It is indemonstrable, that so many incorruptible causes should centre in a corruptible effect, and be combined together to produce an ephemeron, a thing that may have no longer life, according to this opinion, than the day it is born in. Further, the connexion of these words with those, ver. 17, &c. import as much. He exhorts them to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, not servile, but filial; *Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things*, ver. 17. Be encouraged to all holy and humble obedience, since you are fully assured of your perfect redemption, &c. As the blood of Christ does not purchase a corruptible redemption, so neither does the grace of Christ work a corruptible regeneration. As the blood of Christ was incorruptible blood, by virtue of the hypostatical union, and in regard of the efficacy of it to our redemption; so is grace an incorruptible seed, by reason of the believers' union

with the Son of God, its production by the Spirit of God, and in regard of that incorruptible word, whereby it is both begotten and maintained in us. The habit of grace attends the soul to heaven, and for ever. The vital principle was not extinct in David by his gross fall, since we find him not praying for salvation, but the joy of it; not praying for the giving the Spirit, but not taking it away from him, which he had by his sin deserved to be deprived of. *Take not thy holy Spirit from me: Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, Psal.* 51. 11, 12: and also for greater degrees of sanctification, and cleansing his heart from its filthiness and falseness. Grace may indeed, like the sun, be under an eclipse, but its internal light and heat cannot expire.

5. Though grace be *oppressed*, yet it will recover itself. It is indeed sometimes overtopped by temptation, (as a fountain which being overflowed by the torrent of a neighbouring river, is covered while the flood lasts, that a man knows not where to find it; but, after those great waters are slid away, the fountain bubbles up as clearly as before) yet it works all that while under that oppression, though not perceived. It will rise again by virtue of a believer's union with Christ; as a bough bent down by force, yet by virtue of its union to the body of the tree will return to its former postures when the force is removed. The sap in the root of a tree, which the coldness of the season hath stripped of its leaves, will upon the return of the sun disperse itself, and as it were meet it in the utmost branches, and renew its old acquaintance with it. Shall the divine nature in the soul be outstripped by mere nature in the plants? Grace can never be so extinguished, but there will be some spark, whereby it may be re-kindled. The spark of Peter's grace was lighted again by a sudden look of his Master. Yea, it may by a secret influence of the Spirit, gather strength to act more vigorously after its emerging from under the present

oppression, like the sun more warm in its beams after it hath been obscured by fogs. Peter's love was more vigorous after his recovery. Christ implied it, when he acquainted him with his danger, that he who had not strength to keep his faith from falling, should after his rising, have strength both for himself and his brethren. *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren, Luke* 22. 32.

II. Let us see what inconveniences and *reflections upon God* must follow from their doctrine. Their denial of this truth is grounded upon their denial of election, and on the supposed resistibility of grace, by the will of man.

1. It makes void all the promises of God, and concludes them to be *empty vain things*. As if they were made by God in mockery, and to sport himself in deceiving his creature.

(1.) It frustrates the *glory he designs* by the promises. Does God promise his presence with the church to the end of the world? and does it consist with infinite wisdom to make an absolute promise concerning an uncertainty? It is possible, according to this doctrine, that God might not have so much as one sincere worshipper, one faithful servant in the whole earth; not one immediately capable of his gracious presence. What would become of the glory he intended to himself by all the promises of redemption and sanctification, and those praises and admirations he expects from men, when according to this doctrine it is possible there might not be one to give him the glory due to his name, if it were left to their natural wills, whether they would receive the grace offered them, or continue in it, if they do receive it? For if one saint may fall away notwithstanding the covenant of grace, the truth of God, and the strength of Christ, why may not another, and a third, till there be not the appearance of one sincere christian? What certainty then had there been of a church in the world for God to be present with? What cer-

tainty of an admirer of his grace to eternity? Nay, what certainty that any would have received it, had it been left wholly to their natural wills?

The scripture intimates otherwise by representing man to us as dead in sin and enmity against God, one that cannot receive the things of God, &c. May a man be said sincerely to worship God one hour, that doth cast dirt upon him the next, as the peasants in Germany deal with their St. Urban, the patron of their vines? Is that a worship intended by his promises, that might not endure the space of one minute, but be succeeded by the grossest despites and rebellions? Is that fear put into the heart, that they might never depart from him, of no greater prevalency than to come to so sudden a period, and produce no better effects? Is so slight, so short-lived a worship, fit for the great God, by so many declarations in scripture, to promise himself from his creature? No better it would be if it were left only to the creature's corrupt will, and the management of that natural enmity which is in the heart. Is the holiest soul in the world, without assisting and preventing grace, so sure of the immoveableness of his own will, among so many blustering storms and temptations, or flesh-pleasing snares and allurements?

(2.) It frustrates the promises *made to Christ.* Is it consistent with the faithfulness of God to be careless of all the agonies, groans, and blood of his Son? Our Saviour might have bled and died, and not see one grain of seed, but lost all the travail of his soul, if this doctrine be true. Will God, according to these men's fancies, make no greater account of his oath? *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips, Psal.* 89. 33, 34, 35, 36; that the seed of his servant David, the Messiah, as the Jews understand it, should *endure for ever*, and his *loving kindness* he would *not utterly take* from them, nor *suffer his faithfulness to fail.* This, though sworn but once by his holiness, is enough foran eternal

obligation upon God, and a perpetual ground of faith to us. *The pleasure of the Lord* was promised to *prosper in his hand, Isa.* 53. 10. It was to break through * all opposition, and overcome all invaders. Is it a way to glorify his faithfulness to Christ, to take the pleasure, the object of his pleasure, the fruit of his death, out of the hands of Christ, and put it into the hands of free will? The promise is, that his pleasure should prosper in his hands, not in our hands, not in the hands of natural will.

(3.) It frustrates the *comfort* of the promises to us. Does not this doctrine give the lie to that blessed apostle, who was wiser in the mysteries of the gospel than the whole world besides? Doth it not accuse him of arrogance, when by a divine inspiration he confidently persuades himself and all other believers, that neither *angels nor principalities*, &c. *should separate them from the love of God, Rom.* 8. 28, 29. Does God in the scripture pronounce those actually blessed that put their trust in Christ the Messiah? *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him, Psal.* 2. 12. How can it deserve the name of blessedness, and in all of them too, if the faith of any one that sincerely believes in him could be totally and finally lost? Could they be blessed even while they have faith, since the comfort and happiness of any particular act of faith would be overwhelmed by the tormenting fears of the possibility and probability of their losing the habits of it? It is not only probable, but certain to be lost, if its preservation depended upon no other hand but the slight hold of our own will. Adam in innocency fell under a covenant of works, and we should as soon lose our habitual grace under a covenant of grace, did not our stability depend upon a supernatural and divine power promised in it. This doctrine therefore wipes off all the oil of gladness from believers' hearts, and, contrary to Christ's commission, clothes them with

* יעלח א עלה perrumpere.

the spirit of heaviness, instead of the garments of praise.

2. It darkens the *love* of God. Are the products of infinite love so light, as these men would make them? Is not his love as immutable as himself? Can there be decays in an eternal and unchangeable affection? Can any emergencies be unknown from eternity to his omniscience? How then can the fountain of kindness be frozen in his breast? Shall not that everlasting love, which was the only motive to draw the believer at the first conversion to him, be as strong an argument to him to preserve the believer with him? *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee, Jer.* 31. 3. It was love in the choice; but by the expression *loving-kindness,* it seems to be increased in the execution.

What is it then that should make it run as fast backward till it dissolve into disaffection? Was there a love of benevolence towards them in appointing them to be heirs of salvation, when they lay like swine in the confused mass and mire of the corrupt world? And is there not a love of complacency in them, since he hath pardoned them according to the riches of his grace, renewed them by the power of his word, and sealed them by the holy Spirit of promise? Is it likely this everlasting love should sink into hatred, and the glorious fruits of it be dashed in pieces at one blow by a sudden change? To what purpose did he lay the first stone of thy redemption, and bring the blood of his Son and thy soul to kiss each other? Was it not that he might be your God in covenant with you? It was so in the type, the deliverance from Egypt; *Whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt, that I might be their God, Lev.* 26. 45. Much more in the antitype, the deliverance from Satan.

Could the kindness of God be so illustrious, if it did not make the permanency of his gifts a great part of the benefit of them? Can these men then fancy

infinite tenderness so unconcerned, as to let the apple of his eye be plucked out, as to be a careless spectator of the pillage of his jewels by the powers of hell, to have the delight of his soul left in the power of Satan? Which must be the consequence of this doctrine, if a renewed man be at one time in the hands of God, and presently after in the hands of the devil. Is this easy parting with them, like the affection of a mother to her sucking infant? How much less suitable is it to the kindness of God, which infinitely surmounts the other?

3. It disgraceth his *wisdom and power*. Does this doctrine support the honour of God's wisdom in contriving ways so admirable for the restoration of his creature that may be lost in a moment? Is it congruous to infinite wisdom, set on work in man's recovery, to make a covenant that should be more uncertain than the former? Which would be, if it depended only upon the voluble and inconstant temper of the creature's corrupt will for the making it good. The former was less likely to be violated by a nature filled with integrity, than this by a nature filled with iniquity. Is it consistent with the honour of this attribute, to have his wonderful designs, wherein he intended to make known his manifold wisdom, puffed away by a breath of sin and Satan? Was God subject to error or ignorance, in not foreseeing what events might happen, before he obliged himself by promise; or to dissimulation if he did foresee, and notwithstanding all these contrivances and preparations, not absolutely intend the salvation of any one man, but leave it to themselves whether they would be saved or no?

It disgraces his *power*. Where can any safety be expected, if not in our Redeemer's hand? Shall his power be beaten out of breath by the wrestling of Satan? None, say these men, shall pluck them out of God's hand, while they remain there; but they may depart themselves: as though that promise,

John 10. 28, did not provide against their inward corruption, as well as external violence. But the promise is exclusive of all ways of destruction, they *shall not perish*, και μη απολωνται, two negatives to strengthen it, according to the custom of the Greeks: and it is not as it is translated, *no man*, but ουχ αρπαξει τις, *not any one:* if they depart, they perish; but because they *shall not* perish, against which the promise secures them, therefore they shall not depart. If they may be overcome against the will of God, and against his promise, it may be inferred that the devil is superior to God, and that God hath not power, or wants will to make good his promise of perseverance to them. As there never was, so there never will be any violation of his faithfulness, or breach made upon his power. Had God let them lie in their sins, no objection could be made; but since by such an admirable power he hath snatched them from the clutches of the prince of darkness, doth it consist with his wisdom or goodness to throw them away, or to let them fall out of his hands into the power of their old oppressor?

4. It sets God at great *uncertainties* as to the object of his love. If a renewed man be discarded from God's favour, and lose the habit of grace because he commits a sin which deserves death, he would upon every sin be cast off, because every sin deserves death by the rigour of the law, *Rom.* 6. 23. And the whole life of a christian would be nothing else but an interchange of friend and enemy, son and no son. Nay, there could not be a moment fixed, wherein it could be said of any godly man in this life, that he were in God's favour, and had the habit of grace, because there is not a moment but man is guilty of some sin or other, of infirmity at least. If it be said, it is meant only of those sins that waste the conscience: these, we say, cannot live in the constant practice of a regenerate man. But suppose he be overtaken, is he then cast out of favour, i. e. out of

God's everlasting love? I would demand, if he be, what brings him in again? Good works afterwards? Alas! there is not one of them but is mixed with that which deserves eternal death. Can they bring us into favour, which need something themselves to make them accepted? Can the defiled and loathsome garments of nature look so amiable in the eyes of God, as to introduce us to a forfeited favour? Is it our Saviour's merit? That is as sufficient to keep our union with God indissoluble, as it is upon every breach to renew it; for the merit of Christ is greater than the demerit of sin.

If every act of unbelief did destroy faith, might it not be destroyed and revived an hundred times a day? For what is the course of the best christian, but a mixture of faith and unbelief? It is true the bent of the heart stands right in faith; but there are frequent starts of unbelief. Now according to this doctrine, there would be so many blottings out, and so many writings again, of their names in the book of life every day. A man may be in their sense in God's favour, and out of it many times in a day; one moment in a state of salvation, the next in a state of damnation; and so run in a circle from salvation to damnation all the year long.

Is this uncertainty like the stability of mountains and hills, a greater than which God promises; *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee, Isa.* 54. 10. God provided such a covenant of peace that might not be removed, that he might not be at such constant removes in his kindness, as these men would make him. Is it not unworthy to make such a representation of the all-wise and immutable God, as if he were daily caressing his creatures, and daily repenting of those gifts of effectual calling, which the scripture asserts to be *without repentance? Rom.* 11. 29: repentance

of any design is an effect of weakness of judgment as well as mutability of will.

5. It rather sets God at uncertainties, because it *subjects the grace of God to the will of man.* It hangs the glory of God's grace in all the motions of it, and the efficacy of the promise upon the slipperiness of man's will and affections. It makes the omnipotent grace of God follow, not precede the motions of man's will; to be the lacquey, not the leader, either in converting or preserving, which is at the best to make the glory of his grace as volatile as a feather, at the best sometimes up, sometimes down; the soul this moment embraced by God with the dearest affections, the next cast out as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, and the succeeding moment admitted to fresh communications; this hour the temple of the Holy Ghost, the next an habitation for dragons and satyrs, the will of man giving one time the key to the Spirit, the next time to the devil; one time as clean as a saint, another time as foul as a fallen angel; so that a christian's life would be spent in nothing but ejectments and repossessions between God and the devil, and the grace of God beholden for its residence in the heart only to the humour of the will. Is it reasonable thus to subject the fruits of the great undertaking of Christ to the lottery of fancy, and to take the crown from the head of grace, to set upon the scalp of our corrupt will?

6. It frustrates the *design and fruits of election.* The seduction of believers by false prophets, with their train of great signs and wonders, which our Saviour concludes impossible, *There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect, Mat.* 24. 24, is according to this doctrine very easy and natural. One start of the fancy completes it. The impossibility of their embracing, or at least persisting in damnable errors, is founded upon the eternal choice of them by God,

and his decree for their preservation. It was the entry of their names into the Lamb's book of life, that preserved his followers from the contagion in the universal apostacy of the Romish church; *All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, Rev.* 13. 8. If believers could totally and finally fall away from Christ, why is it possible for them to be deceived by damning errors accompanied with such wonders, that might stupify the reason of the wisest natural men, and the elect too, did not their election make it impossible? *The very elect.* But it is laid upon a higher score than their own wisdom, and depends upon that golden chain of electing love, which neither the wit of man, nor malice of devils, the terrors of afflictions, nor pleasures of temptations, are able to break; *Rom.* 8. 38, 39.

7. It frustrates the fruits of Christ's *mediation and offices.* Was it not the design of his coming, according to the ancient promise, that all nations should be blessed in him, in the seed of Abraham, which seed he was? According to this doctrine it is uncertain at the best, whether any one person should be blessed by him or no. If the gates of hell could prevail against one real member of Christ, they might against a second and a third, till he should not have one member to to enjoy a blessing by him. Grace infused is as the *holy fire upon the altar, which descended from heaven, Lev.* 6. 12, 13. And as it was the priest's office, so it is the office of Christ the antitype, to feed it morning and evening by his Spirit, with fresh fuel for its continual support.

According to this doctrine, the offices of Christ signify nothing but with the consent of the will of man. The death of Christ might be wholly an unprofitable sacrifice. The intercession of Christ in heaven would signify nothing since they can persevere without him, and notwithstanding his intercession can fall away. This is to unpriest Christ, and de-

stroy the end of his living for ever. His prophetical office fares no better because they make the efficacy of it depend upon their will; and the teaching of Christ, like the sibyls' writing upon leaves, may be blown away by the next wind. It robs Christ of the key of government, by making every man his own governor in this affair, and denying Christ the sovereign throne in the wills of men. His government would be exercised only in punishing, since none left wholly to themselves, but would prove obstinate rebels. He might be a priest without a people to sacrifice for, an advocate without a client, a prophet without a disciple, and a king without a subject, and so be insignificant in the fruits of all his offices.

8. It disparages the *work of the Spirit*. As if the Spirit of God did tincture the soul with so weak a colour as might be easily washed off by the next shower; as if he did only strew, not sow the seed of grace, easily to be blown away by the next puff of wind, or devoured by fowls. Are the divine image and workmanship of heaven, the products of infinite power, wisdom, and love, of so slight a make as the embracers of this doctrine would fancy? Is the Spirit too weak to hold, or is he unwilling? Would Christ ever send so uncertain a comforter, as he would be, unless he abode with us? Would Christ, after laying so strong and rich a foundation for the redemption of his people, send a deputy that should build so weakly, and work so slightly upon it? The Spirit was to *glorify* Christ, *John* 16. 13. How? Certainly, as Christ glorified the *Father*, *John* 17. 4. But Christ glorified the Father by finishing the work which was given him. Therefore the Spirit will glorify Christ in the same manner by finishing the work he is sent to do; as the Father is not imperfect in his choice, nor Christ in his purchase; so neither will the Spirit be imperfect in his conduct. The very end why God puts the Spirit into the heart, is to preserve the believer from going back from God. What is called

putting the fear of the Lord into us that we might not depart from him, Jer. 32. 40, is called putting a new heart and a new spirit; *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments and do them, Ezek.* 36. 27, and a putting his own Spirit within them to preserve and assist that new habitual grace, for it is to cause them to walk in his statutes. It is not only a cleansing them from their filthiness, and then leaving them to be their own guides, but it is a putting a contrary principle into them; and the end of putting this Spirit into them, is that they should live till they be placed in their own *land, in the heavenly Canaan, Ezek.* 37. 14, and be settled there in the work of admiration, and blessing God for his faithfulness in performing this covenant; *then shall ye know*, by a full experience, *that I the Lord have spoken, and performed it.* I know some understand it of their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; but the words methinks seems to be of a higher import, and the deliverance from Babylon was typical of redemption by Christ. *Jer.* 23. 6, 7, 8, speaking of the days of the gospel, *The Lord lives that brought up the seed of Israel out of the north country.* I leave you to judge; however take it as an allusion. The Spirit will be no more false to God in not answering the end of his being put into the heart, to cause us to walk in his statutes, than Christ was or can be false to God in not answering the end of his designation to the mediatory office. This doctrine quite subverts the end of the Spirit's coming, and being put into the heart of a renewed man, and makes all its work a slight and superficial business.

For a close then of this. This doctrine stands *firm.* Though it be possible and probable, and I may say certain, that the habit of grace in a renewed man, considered abstractedly in itself without God's powerful assistance, would fall and be overwhelmed by the batteries of Satan, and secret treach-

eries of the flesh; yet it is impossible it should wholly fall, being supported by God's truth in his covenant, his power in the performance, held up by the intercession of Christ, and maintained by the inhabitation of the Spirit. Our wills are mutable, but God's promise unchangeable; our strength is feeble, God's power insuperable; our prayers impotent, Christ's intercessions prevalent. Our sins do meritoriously expel it, but the grace of God through the merit of Christ doth efficiently preserve it. If therefore believers fall totally and finally, it must be by themselves, or by the industry of some external agent.

(1.) Not by *themselves*, and their own wills. Not as considered in themselves, but as their wills are the proper subject and seat of this habitual grace. They are made *willing in the day of his power*, *Psal.* 110. 3; and they are continued willing by the influence of the same power, for the day of his power endures for ever. They will not depart out of Christ's hand, because it is the chief part of this grace to determine their wills, and to bring down every high imagination which might pervert their wills, to a subjection to Christ, and fix them upon God as the chief good, and last end. Hence being his sheep, and knowing him for their shepherd, they are said to hear his voice, and follow him; so that this perseverance is not a forced and constrained work. They cannot totally fall by their own wills, they are renewed and strengthened; nor by their own corruption, that is subdued and mortified by the Spirit of God, which is continually in arms against it; and if when it was in its full strength, it could not hinder the power of God's grace in conversion, surely when it is thus impaired, and only some relics of it (though alas! too much) abiding, it can less resist the power of the same grace in our preservation.

Again, not by their own wills, for it is here that grace sets its throne, and establishes the heart,

Neither doth that life which is hid with Christ in God, depend upon the levity of our wills; it being an abiding life, it hath an influence upon our wills to preserve them in a due bent, wherein they are set by the Spirit.

(2.) Not by any *external* agent.

[1.] Not by *God*. The counsel of his election stands firm: and they are heirs by an immutable covenant. Though God by reason of his omnipotent sovereignty might justifiably take grace away, and we deserve it, yet morally, in regard of the immutability of his righteousness and truth, he will not. Christ will not do it. He died to purchase it, and lives for ever to preserve it. The Spirit will do it, the end of his coming and indwelling is to maintain it.

[2.] Not by Satan; for *he that is in us is greater* and stronger *than he that is in the world*, 1 *John* 4. 4, in all the allurements, and affrightments of the world. Not by his temptations; they shall either be intercepted or resisted by an assisting grace stronger than their author's malice; *God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13.

[3.] Not by the *world*. If the God of the world cannot do it, the world itself shall not be able. Christ hath conquered the world for us by his death, *John* 16. 23, and hath given us power to conquer it by our faith, 1 *John* 5. 4.

PART V.

THE SUBJECT PROPOSED AS A SOURCE OF CONSOLATION.

The state of the believer superior to Adam's by creation —Secure as the state of the invisible church—Their comfort under weakness of grace—Their foundation—The strongest grace weak at first—All grace is sure—Weak grace is the charge of Jesus —He delights in his charge—He will be faithful to it—He has given good evidences of his faithfulness—Comfort against corruptions—Christ is engaged to save from them—It is his glory to do this —He conquers by degrees– The love of God is not hindered by corruptions—God will bring good out of them.

Secondly. LET us look to the comfort arising from the text.

This doctrine of the preservation of grace is the crown of glory, and sweetness of all other privileges. We should in the midst of regeneration, justification, adoption, droop and be *magor missabibs*, tormented with fears of losing them : it is the assurance of this that makes believers come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Premise this I must ; this comfort belongs only to those that have true grace ; see therefore whether you can find any

saving-work upon your hearts towards God, before you entitle yourselves to the comfort of this doctrine.

1. Our state by redemption and regeneration is better *than Adam's by creation*, in respect of permanency, though not by present integrity. God keeps us safer in a state of imperfection, than Adam was in all his innocence. Adam had a better nature, and a stronger inherent power conferred upon him by creation; he was created after God's image, but he defaced and lost it, and afterwards begat in his own likeness, not in the likeness of God, whereof he was stripped. He had a natural power, but no supernatural assistance. We have no natural power, but we have a supernatural help. Our supernatural assistance confers upon us a better state than his natural power did, or could do upon him. We are *kept by the power of God to salvation*, and he was to be kept by his own. He was to stand by the strength of nature, we by the strength of grace; *Grace wherein you stand, through faith, Rom. 5. 2; By faith you stand, 2 Cor.* 1. 24. Grace is as immutable as nature changeable. He was under the government of his own free will; it is our happiness to be under the conduct of the Son of God by his Spirit; *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, Rom.* 8. 14; and that by virtue of a charge, a privilege never allowed to Adam, nor angels, who being their own keepers, were soon their own destroyers. He had a natural power to stand, but without a will; we have a gracious power to will, and the act of perseverance conferred upon us. He had a power to stand, precepts to stand; promises to encourage him to stand, but not one promise to secure him from falling; we have both a supernatural help, and an immutable promise, that the *fear of God should be put into our hearts, to this end, to preserve us from falling, Jer.* 32. 42.

By Christ we have not only words of grace to encourage us, but the power of grace to establish us; not only precepts to persevere, but promises that we

shall. Otherwise the promise could be no surer than that annexed to the covenant of works. If the condition of it might be as easily lost as the condition of Adam's covenant, then would it lose its end, which was to ensure the promise or covenant to all the seed; *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; that the promise might be sure to all the seed, Rom.* 4. 16. Adam was under a mutable covenant, and we under an everlasting one. Adam had no reserve of nature to supply nature upon any defect; we have out of Christ's *fulness, grace for grace, John* 1. 16. Grace for the supply of grace upon any emergency. The manner whereby we stand is different from the manner of his standing; he stood in dependance on his original righteousness, which being once lost, all the original virtues depending on that, were lost with it.

Our state is secured in higher hands. Christ is made wisdom, &c. *But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,* 1 *Cor.* 1. 30. All which are dispensed to us in the streams, but reserved in him as the fountain. He is made all those to us, not we to ourselves. Adam's life was hid in himself; *ours with Christ in God, Col.* 3. 3. Our life is as secure in Christ, as Christ's is secure in God. Christ's hand, and his Father's bosom, is not be rifled by any power on earth. Heaven is no place to be pillaged by the serpent. Which state then is best? Our nature is restored by the second Adam, fundamentally better; not at present so bright as his, but more permanent. The mutability of the first Adam procured our misery; the strength of the second preserves our security. So that a gracious man is better established in his little grace, by the power of God, than Adam in his flourishing integrity by the strength of his own will.

2. The state of a regenerate man is as *secure* as the state of the *invisible church,* and more firm than that of

any particular visible church in the world. You stand upon as good terms as the whole assembly of the first-born, and upon a surer foundation than any particular church; *They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever*, *Psal.* 125. 1. They shall be impregnable. As stable as that mountain of the Lord's house, which was to be *established on the top of the mountain*, *Isa.* 2. 2, alluding to that temple built upon mount Moriah of a steep ascent, firmer than all the worldly powers and strongest monarchies, compared to mountains in scripture. Particular churches may fall. How is the glory of many of them vanished? Particular believers shall not, because their standing is in Christ, by virtue of that covenant whereof Christ is Mediator, and of that promise made to the whole body, wherein the interest of every member is included; *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, *Matt.* 16. 18; neither the power nor policy of hell-gates, being the seats of judgment, and magazines of arms.

The visible church is only so by profession and privileges; an invisible member is so by nature and union. Appearance will expire when nature shall abide. The mystical body of Christ, and every member of it, can no more die, than the natural body of Christ can now, or any member of that. No member of Christ's fleshly body did or shall see corruption. The knot between the soul and the body is natural by the band of vital spirits; the knot between a true member and Christ is supernatural. The second person in the Trinity, being united to the body of Christ, kept it from corruption. The third person in the Trinity keeps the union between Christ and a mystical member from dissolving, which no particular church in the world, as a church, can lay claim to. Though Christ may discard a particular church, yet not a particular elect person, because of that agreement between his Father and himself concerning those

given to him. But we read not of any whole nation or church in the world given to Christ as such, and in such a manner as a particular person is.

There is a difference between God's electing a people to have the gospel preached, and his electing a person to have the gospel wrought in him. The standing of any particular church is not for itself, but for the elect in it. When God chooseth a nation to be under the preaching of the gospel, it is for the sakes of his elect ones sprinkled among them. And that church stands as long as there are elect persons among them to be brought in. When the number is gathered into God's fold, the gospel is removed thence, because of the rejection of it by the rest. These two elections of persons and matters, the one to grace, and the other to the enjoyment of the ministry of the gospel, are mixed together by the apostle in his discourse, *Rom.* 11. Some places must be understood of the one, and some of the other. When the election is said to be void, it is meant of the election of a nation, as the Jews are called God's chosen people. When it is said to stand, it is meant of the election of a person: as when we say, man is mortal, and man is immortal, it is in different senses both true; mortal according to his body, immortal in respect of his soul.

3. Comfort against the *weakness* of grace. This is the proper comfort of this doctrine. It is, and ought to be, a matter of trouble, that our grace is so weak; it should not be a matter of murmuring and despondency. We have reason to mourn that our graces are not strong; we have reason to rejoice that we have any at all. Weak grace is enrolled in heaven. Not a weak member of the invisible church, but hath his name written there, *Heb.* 10. 23. How glimmering was the disciples' faith! yet our Saviour bids them, in all that weakness, *Rejoice that their names were written in heaven*, *Luke* 10. 20. Could their names have been blotted out again, the joy he exhorts them

to could not have dwelt with such a ground of fear. As the least sin beloved, brings us into alliance with the devil; so the least grace cherished, entitles us to the family of God; for it is but a rough draught with blots, of what God hath fairly drawn in the glorified saints. The weakest grace gives a deadly wound to sin, and a sure, though not so highly comfortable a title to so abundant an entrance into heaven, as a stronger. Do not therefore seek your torment, where you should find your comfort.

(1.) The foundation of weak grace, and the hopes of it, is strong. Every new creature has not an equal strength, but every one has an equal interest in the covenant, and as sure a ground of hope as the highest. The design of God was to make the new covenant secure from the violations of the creature. *I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, Jer.* 31. 31, 32. He would make a covenant stronger than to be broken by them. That covenant was perpetual, in regard of God, for he continued a husband to them, and did nothing to dissolve the knot. This is not to be broken by a person in covenant: If it could be broken, it would be the same with the other covenant, though not in terms, yet in the issue. Now true grace depends upon this covenant: *I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, ver. 23.

Besides, this covenant and the blessings of it are settled upon believers, and every one of them, as an inheritance. *I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee: for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall never depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee, Isa.* 54. 9, 10; and that by oath. It could not have been made over in surer terms. Mountains, the stablest parts of the creation, that cannot be blown away by storms,

shall depart at the end of the world; this covenant shall not. It proceeds not only from love, but kindness, which is love spread with a choicer affection. It is a covenant of peace, wherein their reconciliation with God, and the blessings following from it, are settled upon them, and that as an heritage; *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord*, ver. 17; and lest they should fall or lose their righteousness, the latter clause secures them; *and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.* Whether you understand it of the righteousness of justification or sanctification, it amounts to the same thing.

This is the *sure mercies of David.* So that thou hangest upon a covenant settled fast by the promise and oath of God, and cemented in every part, by the Mediator's blood. God never yet broke his word. It depends upon promise; eternal life was promised before the foundation of the world. *In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began, Tit.* 1. 2; to whom? To Christ, and in him, to all the elect of what size or stature soever, babes as well as strong men. God had time to consider all that inconceivable eternity before Christ came, and yet he never repented of this promise of eternal life, because he cannot lie, which the apostle lays an emphasis upon. When Christ came, all his actions and speeches upon record were pursuant to the confirmation of this promise.

The Lamb, in whose bosom you are carried, was slain from the foundation of the world in the decree of God, and voluntary designation of himself. Was there not a long time to consider? and did he not repent of it all that time? and will he now, since he has paid all the price for your grace, and the continuance of it? Can a little time, sixteen hundred years since Christ was in the flesh, make any alteration in God's counsel, and Christ's design, which eternity could not? Besides, the root is strong, though the branch be weak: buds draw sap from the root, as

well as the forwarder fruit. The least splinter of wood in a tree is a part of the tree. The least atom, though never so small, is a part of the world. Every one in Christ is a part of Christ, and hath a share in the promise made to him. Is there any distinction or difference made in the covenant between weak and strong? The babe in Christ is as well within the verge of it, as the most compact christian. Never then sadden your souls if you find true grace in yourselves, when you are within the arms of an everlasting covenant. The grace which lies smoking in the chaff, has fire in it, as well as that which flames.

(2.) All grace, now triumphant, *was weak at first.* The highest began in a seed, a little seed. The waters of the sanctuary, whereby the propagation of the gospel in the world, and the operation of it in the heart is figured; I say, those waters which will perfectly purify the soul, did at *first reach but to the ancles, Ezek.* 47. 3, 4, 5, after that to the loins, and afterwards arise to the height of waters to swim in. Till you read of any grace in scripture without its mixtures, do not despond. Moses had his encomium of God's familiar; yet though he struck the rock through faith, he struck twice through unbelief, when indeed he was only to speak, not strike, *Num.* 20. 8, 11, which God interprets unbelief, ver. 12. Abraham, who is honoured with the noble title of the father of the faithful, had a distrust of God's promise. *I will make of thee a great nation, I will bless thee: I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, Gen.* 12. 2, 3: Therefore he deals with his wife to call herself his sister for fear of his life in Pharaoh's court, *Gen.* 12. 12: and after much more experience of God's truth, in the court of Abimelech, *Gen.* 20. 11.

(3.) Your stock is *sure.* Your grace is weak, but the stock in Christ's hands for supply is full. He keeps it in his own hands. He knows our necessity better than we do; and measures supplies by his own

wisdom, not by our desires; for *he feeds them with judgment, Ezek.* 34. 16, i. e. he will govern them wisely; for so that place may be understood. It is our happiness, that though we have little in possession, we have much for our necessity. It is our happiness that it is laid so high, that we cannot reach it but by faith, that we have it not in our hands to squander it away. Were it in our own hands, it would quickly be out of them, and we not have a mite left. The covenant with us, was founded upon that made with Christ; *This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever, Isa.* 59. 21. *This is my covenant with them,* i. e. made with us in Christ. *My Spirit that is upon thee, &c.*

As long as Christ hath the Spirit by virtue of that everlasting mediatory covenant, so long shall the Spirit, and the fruits, and power of the gospel, be in the hearts of his people. *The words in the mouth of his seed,* depend upon *the word put into his mouth,* and *the Spirit put upon him.* The covenant was made with Christ, not for himself, but for his seed, and his seed's seed, made with them, but founded upon him; it was for the sakes the Spirit was put upon him; for their sakes that words were put into his mouth; for their sakes for whom he sanctified himself, *John* 17: even for the sakes of those weak disciples, he then prayed for. The words put into his mouth were not bare words, but attended with spirit; not mere professions, but operative. And this was to abide upon him for them, henceforth, and for ever, for he calls it a covenant with them, yet turns and speaks to one person. It must therefore be for them, that this person is endowed with the spirit, otherwise it was not a covenant with them.

(4.) Christ's *charge* extends to this weak grace. It

was for this reason he hath the order given him in the text by his Father, not for the standing reed or flaming flax, though that is included. The weakest is here committed to him, and therefore is as much under his care. To what purpose hath Christ this order, if the weakness of grace were a ground of despondency? It is a ground of humiliation, but not of distrust. The gardener that regards all his ground, watches over the tenderest plants. Our keeper rises early to look after the tender grapes and pomegranate buds, *Cant.* 7. 12. That which is feeble is as much under his conduct, as that which is vigorous. He was ordered to be a shepherd, whose office is to attend the weak motions of the new fallen lambs. His bosom is appointed a place for them, he gathers them by his arms: i. e. converts them by his power, and was to carry them in his bosom; *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young*, *Isa.* 40. 11. If you can go, he is to guide you gently; if you cannot, he is to bear you tenderly; not on his shoulders, merely by strength, but in his bosom with a tender affection. He is not only *the shepherd, but bishop of our souls*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 25. And our conversion to him makes us part of his diocese; *you are returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.* In all your weakness he was ordained by God for your help; he *laid help upon one that is mighty*, *Psal.* 89. 19, mighty to preserve his power, and mighty to use it. Help supposes persons most in need of it, as the objects to whom it is to be afforded. Every new creature hath not an equal strength, but they have an equal interest in the Redeemer's death and merit, and the weakest may seem more under his care than the strongest, becaue they stand more in need of that office which he is intrusted with, and delights to exercise.

(5.) He *delights* in this charge. It was his delight to do the will of God, yea, and his *meat and drink* to

cherish the beginnings of grace in the Samaritan woman, *John* 4. 34, because it was his Father's work. Surely it was no small part of the joy set before him, that upon his dying he was to be invested with a power to perform his Father's charge. He will not therefore refuse to embrace the feeblest saint. He knew how well the soul of his Father was pleased with his undertaking this care of the smoking flax, as the words intimate, *My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased, Mat.* 12. 18; pleased with that which Christ was to do, whereof that in the text is a part. God takes particular notice of the beginnings of grace, and Christ's affection runs in the same channel with his Father's. Yea, he regards the very trembling degrees of it.

He overlooks all the philosophers at Athens, who boasted themselves to be the grandees in learning, and records only two new converts, *Acts* 17th ult. Dionysius, who for all his ability and justice in judging controversies, had never had his name set down there, but for his faith; and Damaris, a woman, He joins a woman with a judge, to show that he takes notice of the weakest faith, as well as that which is joined with the strongest parts; this great man is mentioned only upon the account of his faith. See also how he overlooks the infirmities of Job, *Hast thou considered my servant Job? Job.* 2. 3; though he knew them as well as his graces; and not only approves of him, and defends him, but makes his boast of him. He makes a public proclamation with joy in the very teeth of the devil. Though he had so many pure angels about him, that one would think he should have spoken of with applause, as well as of a poor mortal. Was Job's grace very strong? what means then that multitude of impatient expressions scattered in the book?

(6.) He will therefore be *faithful* in it. His faithfulness is more illustrious in regarding the more troublesome parts of his charge: as the fidelity of a friend or servant is more evidenced by the difficulty.

than the facility of his trust. When he knew how weak we are, and how apt to swerve; had he not been resolved to relieve us, he had never sent his Spirit to abide with us for such an end. The apostle assures us, that the care lies upon him still to confirm us to the end; *Who shall also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus*; 1 *Cor.* 1. 8; *in the day*, not before; expect not grace to be triumphant till then. Wherein the faithfulness of God also bears a part, ver. 9. And surely those Corinthians were none of the strongest, when the apostle doubts whether he should write to them as spiritual, or as unto carnal. The weakest is his seed, and he will not lose it. You cannot value your security more than Christ values the honour of his office, and it being his Father's pleasure he should exercise it, it affects him more than the desires of your security can affect you. Suppose he himself had no love to grace, yet you cannot doubt, but that he hath so much respect to his Father, as not to displease him by a neglect of that which he solemnly committed to him as a pledge of his affection, and a testimony of his confidence in him. He will also be faithful to his own glory; but the *fulfilling of the work of faith with power* is for the glory of his name, 2 *Thes.* 1. 11, 12. It is one part of the glory he reserves to himself, to be admired not only by them that believe, but in them at the last day, ver. 10, admired in the admirable conduct of their faith through all weakness and difficulties.

(7.) He has given *evidences* of this faithfulness. He never yet put out a dim candle, that was lighted at the sun of righteousness.

It was his *course* in the world. He found some smoking flax in the ruler; *Come down and heal my son; come down ere my child dies, John* 4. 47, 48, 49. He thought Christ could cure his Son, there was some fire of faith; but not unless he came to his house, and that before he died too, as if Christ could not recover him by a word, and could not restore him

after his breath was expired. Christ, according to his office of not quenching smoking flax, complies with him. So *Mark* 7. 32. Their faith thought Christ could cure their friends, but not unless he *laid his hands upon them;* yet he grants their requests. He easily complies with a weak faith, when he loves to put a strong one to its shifts. As he did in the repulse he gave to the woman of Canaan, whose faith afterwards he applauds with admiration, O woman, great is thy faith!

It was his disposition *after* his resurrection, *Luke* 24. 13. He meets with two disciples going to Emmaus, who seem to have thrown away all their faith and hope in him, and to be upon the brink of the sin against the Holy Ghost; *We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel,* ver. 21. The next words in course were like to have been, but we think him an impostor. But doth Christ with indignation cast them off as though he would have no more to do with them? No; he takes pains to enliven their faith, and takes occasion from their weakness to renew their strength; and that in so eminent a manner, that it seems to be one of the most excellent sermons that ever he preached, a comment upon the whole scripture concerning himself, ver. 27. Beginning at Moses, he went through all the prophets, and expounded all the scriptures concerning himself. He filled their heads with knowledge, and inspired their hearts with life.

After his *ascension too.* He takes notice of a little strength in Philadelphia, *Rev.* 3. 8, and opens a door for it, that no man can shut. Well; did our Redeemer ever yet disappoint a trembling faith, or let a limping grace go from him without a blessing? It is too late surely for him to begin now at the close of all things, when the world is almost at an end.

(8.) Therefore you may in the weakest state *expect* assistance. The weakest grace hath a throne of grace to supply it, a God of grace to delight in it, a mediator of

grace to influence it, a spirit of grace to brood upon it. Though our grace be weak, yet the grace of all these are sufficient to preserve us. The weakest grace in Christ's hand shall stand, when the strongest nature without his guard shall fail. It is not our hold of Christ so much preserves us, as Christ's hold of us; though the faith we hang by, be a weak thread, yet Christ hath a strong hand. Had you the grace of a glorified saint, you could not maintain it without his help, and that is sufficient to conduct us through the greatest storms into a safe harbour. The *preserved in Christ* is the happy title of those that are sanctified by God the Father, as Jude speaks; *To them that are sanctified in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.* His mercy is in the heavens, his *righteousness as the great mountain* stable, his title issuing from thence is, the *preserver of man and beast, Psal.* 36. 5, 6. And shall not that which is more valued by him than man and beast, that which is the cause of his keeping up the world, be preserved by him? Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, Isa.* 41. 14. What hath more need to fear than a worm, that is liable to be trod on by every passenger? What hath more reason to fear than a creeping grace in itself? Yet what hath less reason to be afraid, when backed by such a mighty power? It is a weakness, but fortified by an almighty strength; it hath a power which neither Adam with all his nature, nor the holy angels before their confirmation, were ever possessed of.

Well then, the weaker thy grace, the faster let thy dependance be on Christ, and then thou wilt be more secure by that exercise of faith, than by the strongest grace without it. A small vessel managed by a skilful pilot, may be preserved in a rough sea, when a stronger left to itself, will dash in pieces.

4. Comfort against *corruptions.* Indwelling and easily besetting sin is that which makes a believer hang down his head. Oh this enemy within me that I

cannot conquer! surely I shall die one day by the hand of Saul. It is our unbelief and the ignorance of the great transaction between God and Christ, and the tenor of the covenant of grace, which is the ground of all the practical doubts about this doctrine, as well as the notional disputes against it. Every member, though it hath boils and scabs, is as much a member of the body as the soundest till it be cut off, and that it shall not, hath been the design of the whole discourse to prove. Christ doth not cut it off, but heal it. Is it not a part of the covenant of grace to heal *our backslidings? Hos.* 14. 4. When he finds a disease, he cures us by the application of his blood, for the end of *his stripes* was that we might be healed, *Isa.* 53. 5. And though God hath a piercing eye to see every sin and the malignity of every circumstance, yet the motion of his eye that way is not to destroy, but to heal; *I have seen his ways, and will heal him, though he walked frowardly, Isa.* 57. 18, 19. We speak not now of a course of gross sins. No true believer can be guilty of that; there is a great difference between fouling the feet in the mire, and a total wallowing in it like a swine with delight and pleasure.

Therefore consider that,

(1.) Christ's charge extends *to this too.* Is his charge not to break the bruised reed? He is by the same reason to provide against that which would break it. Is he not to quench the smoking flax? Then he is also to prevent the extinction of it by any other cause. The charge cannot be supposed only to tie his own hands from doing it. Such a comfort would be of a small value, while we were endangered by powerful enemies. But this charge arms him with a commission, and lays a necessity upon him to prevent the breaking and quenching of it by any other hand, and therefore obligeth him to withstand that which is most able and most likely to do it; viz. indwelling sin. Though the devil be our great external enemy, yet this is our greatest internal, without whose assistance

the keenest arrows of the devil would be shot at random, and be uncertain in their effects. Christ therefore undertaking the work, undertakes every part of the charge, and this among the rest.

The conquest of this in the soul was the reason of the oblation of himself; *Who gave himself for us not only to redeem from iniquity*, but *to purify a people peculiar to himself*, *Tit.* 2. 14. Is it agreeable to the wisdom of Christ, to neglect the main end of his undertaking, which was to make an end of sin? *Dan.* 2. 4. What end is there if it recover its loss, and regain its empire in a believing soul? It were in vain for him to go to heaven to prepare mansions for believers, and send his Spirit to prepare them for those mansions, if corruption should get a full head, which would incapacitate them for ever possessing those mansions. Would he be worthy of the name of Saviour, yea, and salvation, a title God conferred upon him in the past ages, if he should not save those that have the mark of God upon them from that corruption, without which deliverance they could not enjoy any real benefit of his purchased salvation?

You have no reason to question his power, and as little to suspect his faithfulness. The distrust of either is an unworthy reflection upon that God that chose him for this work, and upheld him in it. Infinite wisdom and immutable goodness would never have pitched upon a person, for the restoration of mankind, of a dubious fidelity. This were to disparage his wisdom, sully the glory of his mercy, and render the designs of his goodness insignificant. Shall not this great person be thought fit to be trusted by us against our enemies, when we have both his own word, and his Father's for his willingness and ability, whom God thought fit to trust with a power against the greatest enemy he had in the world upon his own single promise? It is unworthy for us to nourish jealousies of so great a Redeemer, when God that sent him, never had cause to have the least suspicion of

him. Let me then beg this of any desponding soul, not to distrust the Redeemer's faithfulness, till you meet with a person of more unblemished fidelity to confide in.

(2.) He has an *enmity* against your corruptions. Sin hath done more wrong to God than ever it did to us. Can it be thought then, that he should let so injurious an enemy reign in the hearts of any that love God, and are beloved by him? Your hatred against it cannot be so great as his, because you cannot arrive to an equality of holiness with him; the greater the holiness, the greater the hatred to any thing contrary to it. Our high priest is *holy, separate from sinners*, and therefore *made higher than the heavens*, *Heb.* 7. 26. Separate from sin too, in all kinds of affection. Letting sin reign in them for whom he is a priest, is inconsistent with the holiness of his office. Had he not had an indignation against sin, and a pity to the sinner, he would have spared both the trouble of coming and the pains of dying.

(3.) His *residence in heaven* is an evidence that this corruption shall be destroyed. *The heavens must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things*, *Act.* 3. 22. Αποκατάσαι, τελείωσις, so Hesychius. Till the time of the perfection of all things: His being there is an evidence that things shall be restored to a perfect state. It was promised by God from the beginning of the world, all the prophecies were designed to declare it, that those things deformed by the devil should be restored to their primitive lustre. Things cannot be restored till sin be destroyed, grace fully completed, Satan put out of all dominion; in a word, all his enemies put under his feet; and we have the greatest assurance of this; for God hath repeated it again and again by all the prophets from the beginning of the world, as if God's thoughts run upon nothing else but this, and the Spirit of prophecy was nothing else but the testimony of Jesus; (as indeed it is not, *Rev.* 19. 10.) a witness of what Christ

was to do. He hath the government to restore things. If every thing is to be restored, believers certainly shall not be left out. It was his main design to expel unbelief and sin out of the hearts of his disciples by his gracious exhortations when he was in the world; much more will he do it by his power conferred upon him since his resurrection, and possessed by him upon his ascension. He sits king in heaven to restore this.

(4.) It is his glory to conquer them. The stronger our corruptions are, the firmer ground hath Christ to glorify his strength in our weakness. If they were not so strong and sin so foul, redemption would not appear so plenteous. His office is chiefly exercised about those; when those are fully conquered in all the elect, his office ceaseth, and the kingdom is to be resigned to the Father. Till then he is a shepherd, and in that respect his office is to find his sheep out when they wander, and bring them home: If he came to seek that which was lost, it is no less for his honour to preserve that which he hath found. The choicer the thing, and the stronger the opposition, the more glory accrues to the preserver of it. Is it for his honour to begin a work in thee, and start back from it? Is it likely he would ever have struck a stroke at those hard hearts of ours, if he did not intend to make thorough work with them? He never yet did any work by halves, and shall he begin now?

(5.) It is already *condemned* by him. God condemned sin in the flesh by the sacrifice of Christ; *And for sin condemned sin in the flesh*, *Rom.* 8. 3. As at his death there was a general condemnation of sin in its nature, so upon faith in this sacrifice, our faith in his blood, there is a particular condemnation of sin in its power, as an unrighteous thing, and not fit by reason of its malignity to have a standing there. He condemned it by his holiness in the law, by his justice in the death of Christ, and by his mercy in the renewing of thy nature, which is always accompanied with a condemnation, and in part an execution of sin.

When the guilt of thy sin was pardoned, the power of thy sin was condemned. As the pardon of the one will not be reversed, so neither shall the condemnation of the other.

If it be condemned by our Saviour in his flesh, it will be conquered in us by his Spirit; for whatsoever was done by Christ as Mediator in his person, was an evidence of what he would do by his Spirit in his members, according to their capacity. Hence they are said to be crucified, risen, ascended, and to sit in heavenly places with him, not only virtually in him, as their head, but spiritually in themselves. Shall a dying, gasping sin overpower a living, thriving grace? Sin therefore shall be conquered. The Father by his Spirit will purge away the worms and suckers which may hinder the growth and ripening of the fruit; *Every branch that bears fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit, John* 15. 2. If a branch, though small, he will take care to remove the hinderance to its fruitfulness. God foresaw what infirmities thou wouldst have, before he gave Christ this commission; and Christ foresaw them before his acceptance of the charge. If their prescience could not stop God in his gift, nor cool Christ in his acceptance, why should it now?

But,

This conquest is by *degrees.* It is victory promised in the text, therefore a conflict is implied, and must be endured. Victory doth not attend the beginning of a war just at the heels. Some time must be allowed between the smoke and flame. Christ must not quench the smoke; but grace may smoke, and only smoke for a while. His charge is to keep that which is committed to him, not presently to overthrow its enemies. He will eye his authority and instructions, as he is God's servant; for as he hath received a commandment from his Father, *John* 14. 31, so he acts. He will not perfect it in an instant, but at length he will. Light, and a fulness of it, is sown for the

righteous. It is but sown, time must be allowed between that and the harvest. The new creation is not, no more than the old was, perfected at once. Can you expect your Saviour should make quicker work with you than with his disciples when he was upon the earth? It was his pleasure not to reduce them presently to a perfect state. Neither can we expect more than our Saviour prayed for, which was not that you should be without foils to your faith, but without the failing of your faith. He did not desire his Father presently to take them out of a world of sin, or sin presently from them, but to preserve them under it, from being conquered by it. God *works to will and to do*, but *of his own good pleasure*. Not as we please, but as himself pleaseth.

Yet while corruptions do continue, the love of God to thee is not *hindered* by them. The incorruptible seed, which is his own, will more prevail to draw out his love, than thy infirmities to engage his hatred against thee. When Christ hung upon the cross with all the sins of believers about him, God did not withdraw his love from him, because of that righteousness, holiness, and love to God found in him; yet he withdrew his comfortable presence, to show his hatred of sin. As God dealt with the head, so he will with the members. Especially if your hearts begin to hanker after any sin; though he hath engaged not to take away his loving kindness from you, yet he may withdraw his comfort, till you have repented of your sin. He may chastise you with rods, but will not suffer his faithfulness to fail. He will, as a mother, raise you when you fall, but whip you for falling, to cause you to take more heed. Christ seems to have had as much reason to cast off his disciples, as ever he had to cast off any believing soul since. None could ever forsake him in such extremity as they did, for his person will never be in the like straits again. Yet having once loved them, he loved them to the end, and after the end, after his

resurrection, as appears by viewing the story. And it is to be observed, that though their unbelief, ignorance, and pride did often fume from them in the presence of their Master, yet Christ mentions none of them in his prayer to his Father; only their grace, *John* 17. 6. 8. They have kept thy word; they have believed that thou didst send me. They had indeed received the word of God, but it was lodged in souls very muddy.

And further, while corruptions continue, God by his wisdom and grace draws *profit* to you from them. The very stirring of one sin is sometimes the ruin of another; a gross sin sometimes is the occasional break-neck of spiritual pride. The high thoughts Peter had conceived of himself upon the confession of Christ, were not scattered, till he had as shamefully denied him, as before he had gloriously confessed him. The *thorn in the flesh* of that great apostle, whether it was an outward temptation, or inward corruption, kept him upon his level from being lifted up above measure. Thus doth Christ make good his charge by ordering things so by his wisdom, that that which would in itself quench the smoking flax, is an occasional means to inflame it. The fogs which threaten the choking the sun, make his heat more vigorous after the dispersion of those vapours. Neither can sin, because it hath no positive being, be excluded from the number of those things which by the over-ruling grace of God are ordered to *our good*, *Rom.* 8. 28. though it be not in its own nature, since the penmen of scripture spake not always according to the rules and terms of philosophy.

For a close therefore of this: Perhaps it is our own fault that our corruptions are no more shattered. God hath given you success against some sin. But have your hearts been as much elevated in praise for it, as they were before in fervent in prayer? If corruption gather strength, charge not God with want of

love, but yourselves with want of thankfulness. Prayer procures mercy, but praise is a means to continue it. As we must depend upon his strength for a victory, so we must acknowledge his strength in our success; else he may withdraw his power, and our enemies may thereupon re-assume new life, and assault us with a greater courage. Again, let not any thing you have heard of the faithfulness and power of Christ make you neglect your duty. Let Asaph be your pattern, *Psal.* 73, who after a strong conflict with sin, had an assurance that God *would guide him by his counsel to glory*, ver. 24. This makes him not lazy, but quickens him into a resolve, that it was good, and *good for him* too *to draw nigh to God*, ver. 28. God is ready with his counsel to guide us, but we must be ready with our petitions.

PART VI.

THE DUTIES INFERRED FROM THE SUBJECT.

Men should labour for a state of grace—Examine whether they are in such a state—Cautions—Grace not immutable and independent—The power that creates must preserve—Standing in a state of glory only by grace—Grace therefore must be essential to security on earth—Falls of others should make us more thankful—Compassionate—Weak christians not to be despised—Stedfastness enjoined—Sincerity—Increase of spiritual knowledge—Not to rest in present attainments—To study our divine example—Conscientiousness in the discharge of duty—To exercise much grace—Faith—Patience—Love—Humility—Holy resolutions to be renewed—The first state of conversion to be remembered—Influences of the Spirit to be cherished—Anticipation of future glory.

Thirdly, THE subject of the text suggests matter of *duty.*

1. How should men *labour* to get into a state of grace! To get within the verge of Christ's commission into such a security which may at last bring them to an eternal triumph over death and hell! Security of estate, and security of person and interest,

is the main intendment of men in the world. But security of soul is least in men's thoughts. Should not this latter be as seriously minded? Where there is a strong tower wherein they might be infallibly preserved in the time of hostile invasion, and be out of the reach of the enemies' battery, how greedy would men be to get under the shelter? Such a *strong tower is the name of the Lord*, and those that put their trust in him, shall be safe both against open invasion and secret stratagems. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe, Prov.* 18. 10. By the name of the Lord, the Jews understand in this place, and in many other, the Messiah appointed for the security of the righteous. Methinks every natural man should run with all haste into his closet, fall upon his knees, and not rise till he has that grace which is by God's order the subject of Christ's tender care. Methinks he should cry and groan, sigh and pray, till he have at least some smoking flax.

There is no *medium;* we must either be under the conduct of Christ, or the government of the devil. If we are in our natural state, we are not enrolled in Christ's family. There is nothing for Christ, but enough for the devil to make victorious. Smoking grace shall grow into a flame of love, and smoking sins into a flame of wrath. Smoking grace is under his care, and smoking sins under his vengeance. As at the last, Christ shall come to be admired in all them that believe, i. e. in the conduct of them through grace to happiness, so he shall be admired too in the *vengeance* he shall take upon all them *that obey not the gospel, 2 Thess.* 1. 8, 10.

2. *Examine* whether you have grace or no. It is not lost time to enquire whether you have this victorious principle? Put those questions to your souls. Have I a sincere resolution to discard my former sin? Do I most abhor my darling lusts? Is the burden of this body of death, my greatest grief?

Have I valuations of Christ above all the world? Would I rather be under the gracious government of Christ, than be the greatest prince in the world without it? Do I esteem God my chief good, and delight in spiritual converse with him, above thousands of gold and silver? Have I a relish of the things of God above all the pleasures of sense? Is the knowledge of God, and excitation of my affections towards him, my chief light? Try it by its activity. It is a true maxim, *operari sequitur esse.* To be without operation, is not to be. If there be not the operation, there is not the essence of grace. It is impossible so active a being as that should lie idle in the soul; there will be smoke, strong desires, ascents upwards, and aims at an heavenly region, though sometimes it be hindered in its direct ascent by the violence of the winds, as the smoke is. Every creature is active in that which concerns its welfare; grace therefore will be as active as any natural thing whatsoever, according to its degrees, because it is a divine communication, a participation of the divine nature. It being more noble, and of a choicer extraction than any other creature, it will be more active to resist the invasions of the devil, and to remove towards God as its chief end.

Only take these cautions: (1.) *Judge* not of thy want of grace by the not acting of *that grace which formerly* was very *vigorous.* One grace may for a time cease to act so sensibly, to give way to the powerful operations of another. John Baptist did decrease, that Christ might increase. Graces have their particular seasons to traverse the stage of the soul, sometimes love, sometimes hope, sometimes patience, humility, faith, and dependance, sometimes sorrow for sin, sometimes joy, &c. (2.) Again, grace may be sometimes oppressed by a temptation, and so may *cease a sensible acting;* but it will recover itself by degrees.

(3.) If you find upon a diligent search that you

have true grace, *take heed of nourishing jealousies of God,* and unbelieving doubts of the care of Christ over you. We indeed often have our fears of ourselves upon the clouding of our evidences; and when we have reason to question the truth of grace, we have very good reason to question our standing also. Though we have a clear prospect of our grace, and know it to be true, yet there may be fears in us of what might have been, had we not this security in Christ's commission. As a man upon a high tower, though hemmed in with strong battlements, and sure that he cannot fall, yet when he looks down, he cannot but have some horror and chilness in his blood at the apprehension of what might be, if he had not that protection. *

Neither do I discourage fears in ourselves, and fears of those things which may weaken our hopes of salvation. For those the apostle joins with a confidence in God. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do, Phil.* 2. 12, 13. Fear yourselves, but have confidence in God, a believing fear without an unbelieving jealousy of God's neglect of you. For all doubts of the stability of the covenant, and the perpetual tenderness of God, are brats of a natural pelagianism.

Breathe not your unbelieving fears in the face of Christ; it is a wrong to his commission, a disparagement to his Father's wisdom, as if he had placed so great a trust in feeble hands; and a virtual accusing of God and Christ of the greatest falsity imaginable, whereby we make him more base and deceitful than the worst of men; an affronting the main tenor of the covenant of grace, and making the work of re-redemption to bear no better fruits than that of creation.

How languishing will be our love to God, while we have unworthy suspicions of him, that he should

* Thes. Salm. de Preserver.

love us this day, and be an enemy to us to-morrow? Can we love a man this day, that we fear will the next be our deadly enemy? Let the time spent in such jealous thoughts and complaints of God be spent in duty. Would it not be a trouble to a loving husband, o have his wife complain of her fears of his casting her off after the marriage-knot, and reiterated promises and assurances of his affection? Would she not better engage his affections by a performance of all offices of love and duty towards him?

(4.) Let not this doctrine encourage any *remissness* in our known duties. Let none encourage themselves to a freedom in sin, and presume upon God's preservation of them without the use of means. No; the electing counsel upon which this victory is founded, chose us to the means as well as to the end. He that makes such a consequence, I doubt whether ever he was a christian. I may safely say, that any person that has a settled, resolved, and wilful remisness, never yet was in the covenant of grace, since that promises such a fear of God in the heart which is incompatible with a resolved laziness in duty. It is a new heart and a new spirit, not a lazy heart, that is the intendment of the covenant. The same will which is the seat of grace, can never be the settled seat of the neglects of God. God has promised a victory; but the very promise of victory implies a war, and commands, as well as encourages, a standing to arms. Victories are never gained by sleep and laziness; camps may be beat up, and throats cut, if guards be neglected.

He that is not under the influence of the doctrine of grace, never had the truth of habitual grace in him. He that has not learned the lesson which the grace or gospel of God teaches, to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, &c. *Tit.* 2. 11, 12, was never any proficient in Christ's school, never had any work of grace. It is the nature of grace to be active. It is a divine principle; security a diabolical; darkness

and light cannot blend together in intense degrees; Christ and Belial cannot shake friendly hands. Security is never the effect, but the disease of grace, the death of holiness, and the life of sin. That grace which assures us to the end, will make us conscionable in the means to attain it. A partial security is also very dangerous in a christian. It will kill our comfort, though it may not destroy our souls. It will impair the beauty of grace, though not its being. Would any but a madman under a distemper, neglect the means to restore his healthfulness, because he were sure to live so long a time?

(5.) *Admire* the grace of God. How much are we beholden to the grace of God which is at an hourly expence upon us? As his providence is called a continual creation by the efflux of his power, so our preservation in the new state is a continual regeneration by the influence of his grace. God in giving thee grace, hath given thee more than if he had given thee all the glory of the world. All other things are managed only by a common providence, this is put more immediately under Christ's charge. By giving thee this, which is a peculiar part of his commission, he hath given thee such a guardian, such an advantage, which could never have been gained by a confluence of all the honours in the world.

It is a standing miracle in the world, that all the floods of temptations should not be able to quench this little heavenly spark in the heart; that it should be preserved from being smothered by the steams of sin, which arise in us; that a little smoking flax should smoke and burn in spite of all the buckets of water which are poured upon it. To see a rich jewel in a child's hand, with a troop of thieves about him snatching at it, and yet not able to plunder, would raise an astonishment both in the actors and spectators, and make them conclude an invisible strength that protects the child, and defeats the invaders. Thus God perfects his strength in our weakness, and ordains

matter for praise in the mouths and hearts of babes and sucklings.

(6.) *Acknowledge* thy standing and thy present victories only to be by the grace of God. Give the grace of God its due praise. God hath fixed our standing in Christ, and intrusted and charged him with our preservation, that grace might triumph in the whole christian-pilgrimage, till we come to the land of rest; that nothing may, be heard either in heaven or earth, but the acclamations *of grace, grace. God put no trust in his saints, Job* 15. 15. In some other person therefore as the head of them. The ground of our perseverance is not in ourselves then, since God puts no trust in us, but in another, in the Mediator.

We cannot beat men too much off from themselves; and therefore to strengthen this, take these propositions. [1.] Grace in its own nature is not *immutable nor independent.* Immutability is not intrinsical to grace; neither is it, nor can it be, the essential property of any creature, though never so high. It is a natural perfection belonging only to God. The habit of grace is called an *incorruptible seed;* not that it is so in its own nature, for it is a creature, and therefore defectible; for mutability is as much belonging to the essence of a creature, as immutability to the essence of God. As it is impossible God should be mutable, so it is impossible a creature should be in its own nature immutable. But grace is immortal in respect of that omnipotent power which attends the principle, and spreads its warm wings over it, as the Spirit over the world, to bring it to a perfect beauty and order out of the chaos. If grace did not depend upon God in its preservation, but were unchangeable in its own nature, it might be counted as perfect as God, whose only prerogative it is to be independent and immutable in himself. The heathens could say, there was no τὸ ὄν, no *ens*, but God; in him we have our being, and in him only we have our firm and stable being.

[2.] The same power that creates *is necessary to preserve.* There is little difference between creation and conservation; the one gives *primo esse*, the other porro esse. The wisdom and power of God is as eminent in the preservation and government of the world, as in the rearing of it. We are no more able to preserve grace, than we are to create it. We cannot preserve our own thoughts which are the natural products of our minds, much less so rich a treasure as grace, which is purely supernatural, and in the midst of so many pirates which endeavour to rob us of it. As the first habitual grace is by the operation of God's grace in us, so the daily preservation of it is by his assisting grace, which in a sweet way, and yet efficacious, keeps grace in its station, and carries on the soul to further degrees.

As it is the preserving power of God maintains the world, so the auxiliary grace of God maintains grace and all the exercises of it in the heart, which could not else be kept up by all the power of men's wit or will. As the influence of the sun is necessary to all natural productions, preservation and maturity of them, so is the influence of Christ necessary to all productions and preservations of grace. The righteousness whereby we are justified, and whence our habitual grace springs, is laid up in Christ, and our strength too; *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, Isa.* 45. 24. Righteousness to justify us, and strength to preserve us; and as he is our Redeemer, laying thereby the foundation of the new creation; so he is our strength whereby it is preserved; *Oh Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer, Psal.* 19, ult. The former part of the psalm is by the apostle in the Romans applied to the times of the gospel. Our redemption and our strength, our righteousness imputed, our righteousness inherent, and our strength are the effects of the same cause. So that we can no more be our own strength, than be our own redeemers, nor be our own strength no more than our own

righteousness. When Paul complains of his temptation, God answers him that his *grace* should be *sufficient* for him. Not the habitual grace in Paul, but the assisting grace of God, 2 *Cor.* 12. 9. Hence it is that the saints in scripture desire so often God to help them, which they need not, if their inherent grace were sufficient to preserve them.

[3.] The standing of those who are in their consummate state in glory, is only by grace as the chief cause. The good angels and blessed souls are confirmed in that state by a superabounding grace; for by nature they are mutable. Was it the contemplation of the face of God that kept the angels firm in that state? What is the reason some of the angels fell who contemplated God's face at the creation, as well as those that stood? Or is it that they see no good which they want, being advanced the highest of any creatures? Was not this the case of the fallen angels? What good did they want which was proper to a created state? * Besides, confirmation is *'positivus affectus*, a positive effect, and therefore must have a positive cause, a privative cause not being sufficient to produce a positive effect. Or do the good angels and glorified saints continue firm to God, because they know that if they sin, they should be eternally miserable? But this does not become a blessed state to avoid sin for fear of punishment, rather than love of righteousness.

Besides, the happiness of heaven could not be eternal, nor the joy pure, that is mixed with those fears of falling and losing it. Or is it from an affection to the pleasure of the place? Such a self-principle becomes not the purity of that state. But though their inherent grace, the contemplation of God, and delight in him, may be some means of their standing, and methods God useth, yet those are not sufficient of themselves. It is God in his incomprehensible grace which

* Bradw. de Causa Dei. l. 2. c. 15.

preserves them. It is an excellent speech of a holy man * of our neighbour nation; *I am sure if my feet were in heaven, and Christ should say, Defend thyself, I will hold thee no longer, I should go no farther, but presently fall down in many pieces of dead nature.* If you can find one saint that in that place of glory ascribes the beginning or perfection of his salvation to himself, then glory in yourselves too. But not till then, and I am sure you never will.

[4.] If all this be true, much less can the best grace in this world preserve itself, because at best in itself it is weaker than its adversaries. No sooner is grace put into the heart, but all the powers of hell are in arms against it, and would murder the new-born heavenly nature. Now it being a creature weak and imperfect, it cannot be so powerful in operation, as to resist the force of a stronger being, and a subtle and insinuating adversary. Were there no devils to assault, I do not understand how this principle, so weak in itself, were able to make head against the deceitfulness of our own hearts. It is the Spirit steps in to quell those destroyers, and brood upon his own work in the soul. What? Was it Peter's strength, or God's grace in him, that made the difference between him and Judas? Between Paul and the rest of the persecuting pharisees? It is from God's faithfulness that we are established and kept from evil; *But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from evil*, 2 *Thess.* 3. 3. If God, not ourselves: it is true, we will, but God works that will in us. We work, but the grace of God works that work in us, and for us. If by grace we are what we are, it is by grace we do what we do, and that of God's good pleasure, not our merit. Our sufficiency is of God, not of ourselves. Our fruitfulness depends upon our abiding in Christ.

What can dust and ashes do against principalities and powers? What man is able, without the grace of

* Rutherford's Letters, p. 184.

God, to wrestle with an experienced devil? A smoking flax would quickly be blown out or expire after a little blaze, if God did not cherish it; a bruised reed would be trod in the dirt, if he did not secure it. A gracious man depends upon God, as the steel does upon the loadstone in the air, which if once separated, will be carried down with its own weight, and be reduced to a motion proper to its nature. If God should withdraw his grace from us, the grace in us would not preserve us from falling as low as hell; for of itself it is far more insufficient to preserve us, than the strength which angels and Adam had was to preserve them. We are preserved not by any inherent power in ourselves, but by the constant touches of God upon our wills, whereby he keeps our wills fixed to him.

Let not then our free will usurp the praise which is due only to God's grace.

There is great danger in this. To ascribe thy standing or victory to thyself, is an usher to some scurvy and deplorable fall. When we confide too much in ourselves, God leaves us to our own foolish confidence, to reduce us to our proper dependence on him. Peter's boasting of the power of his own grace, was a just cause of his being left to himself, that he might be sensible of his own weakness, and the true ground of his security. If we do fall, it is not for want of faithfulness in God, but for want of thankfulness in us.

It is our sin. So much as we ascribe any thing to our own strength, so much we rob grace of its glory. We provoke the Lord to jealousy, to usurp the praise due to God, who will not have the glory due to his name, ascribed to the creature.

This is also contrary to our advantage. The acknowledgment of our dependency on God is the way to be preserved; the more we give God the glory of his grace, the more will he give us the comfort of it.

(7.) Let the *falls of others* that seem stronger than you, make you more thankful, and more compassionate. If they make you more thankful, they will make you more compassionate. Though you may be engraven with more lively characters of God's image, and in an higher manner like to God, yet grace is to be acknowledged that kept temptations from overcoming you. Let not your pride, but your praise take encouragement from thence. Think not yourselves better, because you are victorious while others are defeated, but God more gracious to you. The continuance of his assisting grace was the cause of your success, as the withdrawing of it was the cause of the other's defeat. If this too much natural corruption be indulged, it is a ground to fear we may shortly be his successors in the like fault, or a worse.

Be more compassionate to others; *If a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted, Gal.* 6. 1. Let the faults of others teach us to exercise the grace of humility in our hearts, and carriage towards them. Make not the breach wider by our censures, which is too wide already by Satan's power. Restore with meekness, not proud censoriousness; by a dove-like meekness like that of our Saviour; the case may shortly be our own, and we may stand in need of his assistance for our restoration. To pity or help a gracious man in such a case, is to assist Christ in his charge, and will be kindly accepted by him. God commanded in the law to help a beast, if they saw it in a ditch. It is unnatural to let an infant lie on the ground, and not lend a hand to lift it up; much more to let an infant grace, the birth of God and charge of Christ, lie grovelling in the earth by the power of sin.

(8.) *Despise* not therefore small grace in any. Is Christ to have a special regard to smoking flax and

bruised reeds? Is it fit we should be of a temper contrary to our Saviour, in despising that which God hath ordered him to regard? Must that be the object of our laughter, which is the object of Christ's tenderest care? Is that to be the subject of our scorn, which is one of the chief parts of his commission to take care of? Can he be thought to be regenerate, who is of a disposition so contrary to him who ought to be his pattern? If God's soul be well-pleased with Christ's care of small grace, he must abominate any temper so opposite to his own, and that of his Son. It is a pride and a scorn like to that of devils, not a spirit like that of God. As the least sin in others must not draw our affection, so the weakest grace in others must not lie under our contempt. Would you tread upon a diamond because it is little, or slight a star bigger than the whole earth, because it seems a little twinkling spark in your eye? Let us look to it then, that we disesteem not that in another, which is of more worth than the whole mass of the ungracious world. It is a gallant disposition not to be offended with that smoke, which doth not offend the Redeemer's eye.

(9.) Stand fast. Leave not off till you gain a full victory; till judgment be brought forth to victory. It is necessary. He that is not at last victorious, was never any soldier under Christ's pay, or inspired with Christ's Spirit. Men may think they stand fast, and are in a prosperous way to victory, when they are not; *Wherefore let him that thinks he stands fast, take heed lest he fall*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 12. There must therefore be much watchfulness and wariness used. Though this doctrine stands firm, yet such exhortations must be used. The word of Christ to Peter, *that his faith should not fail*, was as firm as a rock, yet *he saith unto Peter, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation*, *Mat.* 26. 40, 41; he stirs him particularly to his watchful guard, though there were two others besides, that had not that assu-

rance from his mouth, that their faith should not fail, as Peter had.

Paul promises the Corinthians that *God would not suffer them to be tempted above measure*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13, 14; must they therefore stand idle, and suffer themselves to be carried down the stream of a temptation, and leave God wholly to do his work? No, ver. 14, he draws an argument from this promise to exhort them to their duty, *wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry;* fly, not creep, not go, not walk. Promises are not to encourage our laziness, but quicken our industry. Let not the charge then brought against Ephraim fall upon us, that *our goodness is like a morning dew*, *Hos.* 6. 4. When men begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, the end will be both dreadful and shameful.

An eternal crown is entailed upon a constant faithfulness. Our running in a race near to the end will be insignificant, if then our antagonist get the start of us. It is by this constancy we come nearest the name of God, whch is, *I am that I am*, unchangeable in perfections, and immutable in goodness. Our actions should be suitable to the reward promised, which is not for a day or two, but for eternity. We must hold on and wrestle, till we get the blessing. Without continuance we lose our pains, and the fruit of them, our crown. Run not slowly; but that you may obtain, let your eye be upon the crown, you will never else run swiftly, because not cheerfully.

But withal *means* must be used, to stand fast in grace and gain a victory.* God does not preserve a christian by force, or compel him to keep his standing, as he establishes the earth, or the heavens, but by rational means, by promises and precepts suitable to the condition of a rational and voluntary agent, and proposing affective and alluring arguments to encourage him in his course; yet he leaves not the success barely to this, and the operation of our own wills, but

* Camers de Eccles, p. 227.

attends it with the supernatural power of his Spirit, suitable to the manner of our first conversion, which was not by violence, but by the proposals of the gospel, and the salvation promised in it, wherein a secret power of the Spirit was exerted upon the heart, enlightening the mind, and inclining the will, and drawing it with the cords of a man in a way of love, to a compliance with the gospel promise.

So likewise in the preservation and progress of grace, there is still a secret working of the Spirit of God, with outward exhortations and admonitions to perseverance; thereby keeping up the new habit and new heart in us, quickening it by outward means and rational ways, suited to the judgment and reason of the new creature; and thus keeping his hand upon the will, he moves it to such ends, for which he first touched it, and draws it on from one degree to another, till it comes to perfection.

Therefore we must not make use of this doctrine to neglect the means God hath appointed for the establishing and completing of grace; since God acts with us as rational creatures, we are not only passive but active subjects in this work. John assures the believers, that the unction in them should preserve them from soul-destroying errors. There is this passive perseverance; *As it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him*, 1 *John* 2. 27. Must they therefore be careless? no, ver. 28, he backs it with duty on their parts. *Wherefore, my little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence;* abide in him that certainly abides in you. There is scarce a promise in the whole book of God to encourage us, but is somewhere or other attended with a precept to quicken us. Means.

1. Look well to *sincerity*. This is the blood and vital spirit, which runs through the veins of every grace, without which it is not what it seems to be; faith is not faith, unless it be unfeigned, and what may seem to be love, is not so, unless it be sincere. Sin-

cerity is that principle in the heart which complies with the quickening grace of God, as the vital spirit in a plant with the beams of the sun, which does not only make it stand, but grow against the injuries of the weather. It was God's manner long ago to have a special respect to sincerity; *Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doer, Job* 8. 20, לא ימאס. He will not despise or turn away himself. If a sincere man falls, he will reach out his hand to lift him up, as the antithesis manifests; The word being in the Hebrew, he will not take the evil doer by the hand, לא מחזיק, implying that he holds the other, and raises him up.

It is our sincerity in withstanding the sins and temptations of the world, that the promise of perfect sanctification is made to; *Thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, Rev.* 3. 4, 5, they shall be clothed in white. An allusion to the Jewish custom of admitting the priest's into their office, by clothing them with white, as a badge of their office and continuance in the priesthood. *Job held fast his integrity, Job* 2. 3. And that was a means to preserve and recover him. Uncompounded things are least subject to putrefaction, whereas mixed bodies easily ferment and corrupt; sincerity can never be feeble, because the spirit of power always attends it; *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim.* 1. 7. The apostle couples them both together. A single respect to Christ in the midst of shaking persecution, is both an evidence of the strong touch of the heart by the Spirit, and a preservative against apostacy, as the standing right of the needle in the compass, in the midst of the winds which toss the ship, manifests its powerful touch by the loadstone, and is a means to direct it in its course, and preserve it from a wreck.

2. Get a stock of *spiritual knowledge*, and actuate it often. The grave, considering christian will stand,

when the hot headed professor, like horses of the same temper, will jade and sink under the rider in a few miles. Men whose religion consists rather in a commotion of their passions, than a judicious and considerate determination of their wills, will quickly flag; hot beginners are not durable, violent motions, either in naturals or morals, are not perpetual; get the experience of every truth you hear. Experimental knowledge is the true ballast of the soul, when mere sound and air is a rolling and moveable thing. Mere head professors are as light as a cork dancing upon every dash of water. An experimental taste of the grace of God, viz. that grace of Christ which produces a *coming* to him, is a means to be *built up a spiritual house; If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 3, 4, 5. It must be a taste, not only the hearing of a sound; it is not enough to be sound in judgment, but *spiritual in taste*, *Col.* 1. 23. Skilful musicians, who understand the delicacy of the airs in a tune, will chain their ears to the sound, when an unskilful person will listen, and stare a while, and run away. Our valuations of God are according to the degrees of our knowledge, and our cleavings to him, according to the degrees of our estimations of him.

Actuate it often. Let thy knowledge sink down to thy will, and lie ready by thee, to bring forth new and old upon any exigency. The forgetting the precepts and promises of God, is the cause of fainting, *Heb.* 12. 5. *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy time, and strength of salvation*, *Isa.* 33. 6. As this makes the kingdom of Christ stable in the world, so it will the kingdom of grace in our souls. Get therefore, and actuate a knowledge of the tenor of the covenant, the substance of the promises, the nature and ends of Christ's mediation. *Be strong in the grace that is in Christ*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 1, 3. Have a right understanding of the covenant of grace, which is manifested in and by Christ, of the stock of grace stored up in Christ.

This will make you endure hardship as the soldiers of Christ; this will make you high-spirited in the acting of your faith, and pleas before God, without which both your faith and prayers will be very faint and languishing.

3. Rest not in *small* degrees of grace. It is true, weak grace will keep close to Christ: Philadelphia with her little strength *kept Christ's word, Rev.* 3. 8, yet that pretended grace that always remains in the same posture, may well be suspected as a counterfeit. He that stands at a stay in what he supposeth to be grace, never had grace in truth. It is impossible any thing should be without its essential properties, and it is an essential property of grace to grow, it would not else be the seed of God and an immortal principle; he that has grace, finds such a pleasure and excellency in it, that he can have but little acquiescence in himself without exercise of it. If you do not strengthen your grace, you will make way to strengthen your doubts.

Though weak grace will carry a man to heaven, it will be just as a small and weak vessel surprized by a shattering storm, which though it may get to the shore, yet with excessive hardships and fears; such will sail through a stormy sea, and have a daily contest with stormy doubts ready to overset their hopes; whereas a stout ship well rigged, will play with the waves in the midst of a tempest, and at last pass through all difficulties without many fears into its haven.

We are not perfect here, perfection is a title peculiar to the blessed; *The spirits of just men made perfect, Heb.* 12. 23. Yet we must *press forwards towards it*, to attain the resurrection of the dead, *Phil.* 2. 11, i. e. such a perfection of holiness which shall be the state of glorified souls. When this is our mark, we shall have a further progress in the degrees of grace, and by that means be nearer to a complete victory. Though a man cannot reach the sun in shooting, yet if he aim at it, he shall mount his arrow higher than if he aimed at a shrub.

Well then, let our aims be at the *highest* degrees.

He is so far from gaining strength that does not aspire to a further conquest, that he is in danger to be beaten out of what he hath, and lose the things which he hath wrought. To take up our rest beneath it, is a sign, that neither the hatred of sin our enemy, nor the love of God our friend were ever sincere and well rooted. Not to arrive to a complete victory, is our weakness; not to aspire to it, is our sin; for it answers not the design of Christ's coming, which was not only that we might have life spiritual and eternal, but an abounding life; *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, John* 10. 10. Not a decreasing life, or one that stands at a stay.

4. *Study* much your exemplar and copy. That hope whereby we expect to become like to Christ in an eternally happy state, must be formed by no lower copy than that of Christ himself: *He that hath this hope*, 1 *John* 3. 3, i. e. to see him as he is, *purifies himself as he is pure.* Not as the saints are pure, as Abraham, Noah, Job, Daniel. He that steers himself only by the lower exemplars, will be more subject to imperfect draughts and failings, than he that endeavours to form his soul and life according to the original. He that sets the best copy to imitate, will exceed others who propose lower patterns, though he may not yet come near the original. The apostle directs to study Christ much, who is the foundation of our standing; *Consider him that endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds, Heb.* 12. 3. Consider him *as the author and finisher of your faith,* consider him in his patience on the cross, *despising the shame,* and the success of his heroic temper, and this will inspire you with a holy courage under the contradictions of corruptions and temptations against your grace.

This is our duty; *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, Matt.* 5. 48.

Christ himself commands it, when he exhorts them to mount above publicans in their duty, and not to conform themselves to the low patterns of the world. Some translate it, *You shall be perfect*: enforcing thereby the strength of the command; as men, when they would impose any thing by the stress of their authority, say, *you shall* do such a thing, instead of saying, do such a thing. Be as resolute and vigorous in all your duties to God, as he is in all his notes of mercy and goodness to you.

5. Be *conscientious* in the performance of holy duties. A fire which for a while shoots up to heaven, will faint both in its heat and brightness, without fresh supplies of nourishing matter. Bring fresh wood to the altar, morning and evening, as the priests were bound *for the nourishment of the holy fire*, *Lev.* 5. 12. God in all his promises supposes the use of means. When he promised Hezekiah his life for fifteen years, it cannot be supposed that he should live without eating and exercise. It is both our sin and misery to neglect the means. Therefore let an holy and an humble spirit breathe in all our acts of worship. If we once become listless to duty, we shall quickly become lifeless in it. If we languish in our duties, we shall not long be lively in our graces. The loss of the stomach is a sign of the loss of health. If we would flourish, we must drink of those waters which spring up to everlasting life. If we desire our leaves should prosper, we should often plant ourselves by the rivers of waters; we must be where the sun shines, the dews drop, and the Spirit blows. If you find yourselves growing into a slothful temper, check it betimes, and recall to your minds the pleasure you have had in your lively and warm converses with God in any duty, and how delightful afterwards, both the beauty and comfort of your graces were. Liveliness in action is a sign of the continuance of health; and liveliness in duty, an evidence of the continuance of grace. Let them all be performed in the strength of

Christ. It is not means or ordinances brings judgment to victory, but Christ in them.

Attend upon the *word and sacraments.* As the word was the seed whence grace did spring, so it is the channel through which strength and nourishment is conveyed. It is the *seed, whereby we are begotten*, 1 *Pet.* 1, 23, and the milk whereby we are nourished, 1 *Pet.* 2. 2. If the stomach to our spiritual food grow weak, the vigour of our grace will quickly begin to gasp.

Be much in prayer. This is the chief duty, and that which makes all others more vigorous in their tendency to their end. Our Saviour breathes out strong cries, though he had the strongest assurances of a victorious success, *Heb.* 5. 7. Promises of perseverance should be the guides of our prayers. We may pray most comfortably for that which we are sure to speed in. The Spirit which is sent to comfort us in our fears of miscarrying, is a *spirit of supplication* as well as a spirit of grace, *Zech.* 12. 10. Where it is most a spirit of grace, it will be also most a spirit of supplication. To talk of a gracious man that neglects prayer, is as great nonsense as to tell us of a living man that does not breathe. We in all our distresses make our application to those that have power in their hands. It is God only draws us to Christ, and keeps us with him. It is Christ that is ordered to bring forth judgment unto victory. To him therefore we must be petitioners. He gives us first the grace of desire, that he may with the more honour confer the mercy he intends us. Our Saviour sets us a pattern, in praying to the Father to preserve and keep us, *John* 17. We must not therefore be negligent in our desires of it, or distrustful of the success; especially when we have encouragements by Christ's petition for the same thing, who was never denied by his Father any request for his people. You have many arguments to use; *Strengthen, O Lord, what thou hast wrought for us, Psal.* 68. 28. Let thy power preserve what thy power did work. It is as much to the glory of thy

omnipotent love to second thy own work with thy own strength, as it was to begin it. To what purpose, O God, wert thou pleased to work it, if thou wilt not maintain it? The arguments of God's glory are most prevalent. They were so in the mouth of Moses; plead the same believingly, and thou wilt find the same success. It is for the glory of God you should be victorious. *He which stablisheth us with you, is God*, 2 *Cor.* 1. 21. Shall we think to stand without seeking to the Author of our standing? And that you may pray boldly, believe it to be a thing belonging to you, by virtue of Christ's purchase, as well as your reconciliation and adoption. If you can but pray, you are sure to succeed in the conquest. And you can never want pleas for standing, till God cancel the bond of his everlasting covenant, and depose Christ from his office of an Advocate. Plead these then. God cannot deny his own bond, nor resist the exercise of an office of his own erecting.

6. Exercise *grace much.* Graces, as soldiers well exercised, are more fit to engage an invading enemy. Muster them up often, and see thy strength; but behold it with humility, prayer, and thankfulness. Living bodies grow stronger by moderate exercise; and many things grow rusty and unfit, for want of use. Graces are compared to armour, *Eph.* 6, and armour is the better for use. Frequent blowing up this fire will make it stronger in itself, and more comfortable to us.

(1.) *Faith.* It was by faith that *out of weakness* the ancient worthies *were made stronger*, *Heb.* 11. 24. It was this made Abraham the father of the faithful, and it will make all the children mighty men of valour, *Rom.* 4. 24. It is a mighty expression; *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy*, *Psal.* 147. 11. As if the delight and content of his being were maintained by this grace. He takes pleasure to relieve, and pleasure to support them. Mercy cannot be so hard-

hearted, as to deny assistance to that faith that clings about it: should God do so, he would cast off his pleasure. You can never offend him by cleaving to him with full purpose of love. The faster you hold him, the less power will indwelling sin, or watchful Satan, have to drag you from him; for the more you hold him, the more he holds you; you do not only apprehend him, but are apprehended by him. A sling and stone, with faith in the name of the Lord, will be more successful to pierce the head of Goliah with his whole army of Philistines, than if you did march clothed with Saul's armour; faith will do more than all the arms and ammunition of moral philosophy, so much furbished and trimmed up in our day.

It is to faith all the *victorious* acts of a christian, through the whole scripture, are ascribed. Faith quenches the fiery darts of the devil, faith purifies the heart from inward corruptions, faith wrestles with principalities and powers, faith gets the victory over the world, faith preserves us by engaging God's power for us; and faith in all this contest never leaves us, till it lands us in heaven. It is the prime piece in the christian armour whereby we gain the victory, and therefore there is such an emphasis set upon it, as if though a man had all the rest, and wanted this, he would be foundered in all his attempts; *Above all, taking the shield of faith, Eph.* 6. 16; as if all other pieces, though very gallant and strong, were nothing to this, to keep off the darts of the enemy.

It is a grace *worthy* the exercise. Other graces may fail, and the soul recover; but if faith fail, all is gone. The acting of all our graces depends upon the strength and acting of our faith. The stronger our faith, the greater our stability; the weaker our faith, the more tottering our standing. If the soul could at first go out to God in acts of faith, when its corruptions had the first blow given them, and found success,

much more encouragement hath it to launch out to Christ, and renew the same faith, since the wounds upon its lusts are both more numerous and deeper.

(2.) *Patience.* I mean not patience under afflictions, but a patient waiting; there is need of patience to uphold us in a course of obedience, and need of it also to strengthen our expectations of reward. *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise, Heb.* 10. 36. God in the course of his providence seems sometimes to turn the back of his promise upon us; there is need of a patient waiting, till it turn again and march towards us. He sometimes lets loose the devil upon us, and then we fear the waters will swallow up our souls, and that our spiritual enemies will utterly defeat us; there is need of patience, till God pulls back the chain whereby he holds our enemy. Christ accomplishes the most glorious things by degrees. As he does not give all grace in a moment, so he does not perfect it in a moment. Patience must endure in the whole military exercise. We cannot lay it aside, till we gain the victory. It is as necessary as faith, to entitle us to the inheritance of the promises of perseverance and victory; *Through faith and patience inherit the promises, Heb.* 6. 12. Without it we cannot believe in hope against hope; without it we can never run our race.

(3.) *Love.* Love adds weight to the soul, and suffers not the affections easily to be divorced from the endeared object. The holy angels are fixed in their standing by grace as the principal cause, by the purity of their love, as the internal principle. An intelligent and purified love will not forsake a choice object. The iron mixed with drossy particles, runs not so quick, nor sticks so close to the loadstone, as the refined and best tempered steel. Men embrace not the truth, as truth for want of faith, and they fall from it for want of love; *They receive not the word of truth, 2 Thes.* 2. 10. They receive the truth, but

not the love of the truth. The purer our love, the faster we shall stick to that rock, which is our strength. God is the strength of those that love him; *I will love thee, O Lord my strength, Psal.* 18. 1.

(4.) *Humility.* God gives grace to the humble; then surely the greatest supplies of grace in our deepest exercise of humility. We should find the very workings of God's grace more powerful in us, in the very exercises of this grace. Christ finds those most strangers to him, that are most proud of themselves. He that is not sensible of his own weakness, is never like to have recourse to another for strength. To trust in our grace, is to make our grace a god, because the principal object of the creature's trust is God, and it belongs to him to be so, as the highest good. Now to make our inherent grace the chief object of our trust, is to own it to be as good as God, and as sufficient as God to keep its standing. A conceit of our strength may make us seem bigger, but in reality it makes us weaker. All the humours in the soul meet in its reigning pride. Fearfulness of ourselves, is a good prologue to firmness in God; it will make us more strongly lay hold of his power, and more earnestly plead his faithfulness. Exercise it most after the conquest of a temptation; then it is our time to take heed of spiritual pride, we may else overcome one temptation, and sink under another. Pride after a victory gives the enemy an opportunity of success, upon a new assault with a fresh recruit. Humility is as necessary to preserve us after a conquest, as faith was to arm and strengthen us for it.

7. Frequently *renew* settled and holy resolutions. A soldier unresolved to fight, may easily be defeated. True and sharpened courage treads down those difficulties which would triumph over a cold and wavering spirit. Resolution in a weak man will perform more than strength in a coward. The weakness of our graces, the strength of our temptations, and

the diligence of our spiritual enemies, require strong resolutions. We must be *steadfast and unmoveable, and this will make us abound in the work of the Lord,* 1 *Cor.* 15. 58. Abundant exercise in God's work, will strengthen the habit of grace, increase our skill in the contest, and make the victory more easy and pleasant to us. Let them be believing, humble resolutions in the strength of God's grace, with a jealousy of yourselves; not a vaunting resolution in the strength of your own wills; a fear of ourselves, but a confidence in God. David bound himself to God with a hearty vow, depending upon his strength. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments, Psal.* 119. 106, *I have sworn,* &c. but not in his own strength, for ver. 107, he desires God to quicken him, and to accept the *free-will offering of his mouth,* ver. 108, i. e. the oath which proceeded from a free and resolved will. God will not slight, but strengthen the affectionate resolutions of his creature. We cannot keep ourselves from falling, if we first keep not our resolutions from flagging.

8. Look often back upon your state under convictions, and the first state of conversion. Measure your present complexion by your former temper. Cast up your accounts often, and see whether you thrive or decay; and renew your former dispositions. It is our Saviour's counsel; *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works, Rev.* 2. 5, which cannot be done without reflection upon thy wonted delight in God, thy desires for him, and the sweet communications dispensed by him. Inquire into the cause of thy decay. This is a necessary attendant upon this act of remembrance; for it is not a bare simple act of memory Christ commands, but a diligent inquisition by a practical remembrance. A timely observance of the cause of our loss, will prevent many future ones; without this act, Satan will creep in and finish his business before we are aware.

It is a pleasure to reflect upon the time of danger wherein we have been, and to recount the methods God used in our delivery, and the resolutions we then entertained; *Thy heart shall meditate terror, Isa.* 33. 18. i. e. thou shalt consider what thy troubles were, what the frame of thy heart was, what terrors thou hadst in thy distress: for it is spoken of the gospel-times, when they shall *see the King in his beauty.*

So likewise it is useful to recall to our memory what desires, what fervency in prayer, what holy vows there were in, and upon us, when we were under a wounded spirit, and act the same fervours over again. This would restore and inflame the heart more in duty, and enable thee for the contest, by calling into thy assistance the supplies of all the habitual grace thou hast had since those first heats. Remember then the strength of thy appetite to the word; how your zeal did glow, what sprightliness in your affections, with what devotion your prayers were winged, with what stoutness your faith did breathe, how high it did climb, with what detestation you entertained the motions to sin, with what courage you entered into the lists of temptations, how quick and nimble your obedience was, what a freshness and verdure was upon all your graces. Remember those, and do the same works.

9. *Cherish any breathing* of the Spirit. Man is unable to keep his knowledge and evangelical impressions upon himself without the Spirit; *That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us, 2 Tim.* 1. 14. If we cannot keep the knowledge and form of sound words agreeable to the affection in man whereby he desires knowledge, much less can we preserve grace in us, which is more stomached by corrupted nature. Men have a natural desire to know, but no natural desire to be gracious. Christ promised the Spirit to abide with us, and shall we slight his harbingers which

come to prepare the way for a more powerful residence? We can never prize the assistance of the Holy Ghost, if we neglect the auxiliary force he sends us. Those heavenly motions are the Spirit's orders. How can we expect to gain the victory, when we neglect the directions and conduct of our great General?

Perseverance is no more to be ascribed to our own wills, than our first conversion. As without the Spirit we could never by the power of our own wills turn to God, so without the continuance of his efficacy, the will would never keep with God, but would start from him. We are forgetful creatures, therefore need a monitor; stupid creatures, therefore need a quickener. The main reason of our falls is a non-attendance to those motions; for we cannot ascribe them to the Spirit's carelessness, but our own. We cannot suppose him negligent in his office, but ourselves in our duty. Grace cannot live, if you neglect this oil put into the lamp to preserve it from expiring. The Spirit's motions are the physic he uses for the removal of that which endangers the health of our grace, and cordials to strengthen the languishing spiritual nature to a recovery of itself. Neglect him not therefore; but when you find him turning his back, withdrawing his motions, and beginning to grieve, do what you can to delight him. Beg, pray, cry, with an holy imitation of *David, Lord, take not thy holy Spirit from me, Psal.* 51. 11.

10. Take frequent views of glory. An heavenly conversation will quicken our graces, enliven our duties; while the vigour of both is kept up, the heart cannot flag in the ways of God. Can a man be lazy in a duty, when he considers he must pray, hear, meditate, walk for heaven? The heat of our graces will be purer and more durable, when we approach nearest, and lie closest under the sun-beams. Glory in the eye will encourage grace in the heart, and quicken a resolution against temptations, and contempt of the foolish pleasures and enticements of the

world, as the glory set before Christ made him despise the shame of the cross.

To conclude the whole.

(1.) Look to the *first* flagging of thy heart, thy *first* remissness in religious duties. Slothful proceedings become not fervent beginnings.

(2.) Be much in the duty of *mortification.* Shake off every weight, *Heb.* 12. 1, that may weaken thee in thy course. Those that are to run a race, or go to a battle, carry not burdens with them.

(3.) Entertain wise considerations of the *worst that may happen* in your christian course. Prepare against the worst, though it may never come upon you. Consider the fury of persecutors, the diligence of the devil, the multitude of temptations, and what promises are suited to elevate you above them.

(4) Remember the *promise.* This will still us in our wavering; *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: for he is faithful that promised, Heb.* 10. 23.

MERCY RECEIVED.

Psal. 56. 12, 13.

THY VOWS ARE UPON ME, O GOD: I WILL RENDER PRAISE UNTO THEE. FOR THOU HAST DELIVERED MY SOUL FROM DEATH: WILT NOT THOU DELIVER MY FEET FROM FALLING, THAT I MAY WALK BEFORE GOD IN THE LIGHT OF THE LIVING?

THE REMEMBRANCE OF MERCY PERPETUATED.

The author of the psalm—Import of the text—Mercies received to be remembered—Because they are the mercies of God—Purchased by Christ—Beneficial to man—To be remembered thankfully—Affectionately—Obediently—Humbly—Fiducially—Past mercies an encouragement to ask for others—God is able to communicate more mercies— His affection the same as in former communications--The ground of hope remains the same—One spiritual mercy the earnest of others—Caution against forgetfulness—Reasons for caution—Mercies obtained should encourage trust for the future.

THIS psalm was penned by David when he was in a notable affliction, when the Philistines took him in Gath. David had fled from the fury of Saul to Abimelech, otherwise Achish, king of Gath, a city of the Philistines, 1 *Sam.* 21. 10, 12, 13, where he changed his behaviour. Whether this was penned at the same

time that the 34th psalm was, or before, is uncertain. perhaps before; for it is said, When they took him in Gath. Though David fled thither for the preservation of his life, yet being known to be that famous person who had been celebrated in the songs of the Israelites, as slaying his *ten thousands* in the slaughter of Goliah, 1 *Sam.* 21. 11, he might perhaps be apprehended as a suspected person, coming thither upon design; or else from desire to revenge themselves upon him for the slaughter of Goliah, who was their countryman and citizen; for he was of Gath, 1 *Sam.* 17. 23. And some appearance there is that it was this, by Achish's speech to his servants; *Lo, you see the man is mad: wherefore have you brought him to me,* 1 *Sam.* 21. 14. Howsoever it was, he was in some trouble; yet still keeps his faith and hope as an anchor fixed on God; *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee,* ver. 3. And his assurance of deliverance upon his prayer; *When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know, for God is for me. In God will I praise his word: in the Lord I will praise his word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me,* ver. 9; and stirs up himself to thankfulness upon the remembrance of former mercies; *Thy vows, &c.* ver. 12, and to confidence for future; *For thou hast delivered, &c.* ver. 13.

You have here, 1. The commemoration of former mercies: *Thou hast delivered.* 2. The confidence of future: *Wilt not thou?* 3. The end of all: *To walk before God in the light of the living.*

Vows. Thy vows are upon me, O God. Passively, vows made to God, not by God: or the obligations of those vows and prayers which I have made, and upon which I have received answers. Sacrifices of thanksgiving were called vows, as having been vowed to God upon the want, and to be paid upon the receipt of mercy; *If the sacrifice that is offered be a vow, Lev.* 1. Thy vows are upon me; the fruit of

my vows, so that I stand indebted to God for the return of praise.

Thou hast delivered. He understands some great danger, wherein he had sunk, had not God stood by him. And from a greater mercy, the deliverance of his soul from death, argues for a less, the keeping his feet from falling.

That I may walk before God in the light of the living. By light of the living is meant life, which is called a being enlightened with the *light of the living*, *Job* 33. 30. Sometimes eternal life in heaven, *He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, *John* 8. 12.

To walk before God. To walk obediently in the sight of God, with a respect to his presence; a walking unto all well-pleasing. This is the last argument in the Psalm, whereon he builds his strongest plea, as if he knew not what to urge if this should fail him; as if he should have said, Lord, I have had experience of thy wisdom in contriving, thy power in effecting, thy mercy in bestowing deliverance upon me, thy goodness in answering my vows and prayers. *Thou hast delivered from death*, a danger as great and unavoidable as death itself. O Lord, art thou not the same that thou wert? Art thou not still as wise to design, and as gracious to confer further mercy? Wilt thou not as certainly also deliver my feet from falling? The one contains his experience, the other the inference or conclusion he draws from it.

Doct. 1. Mercies received are in a special manner to be *remembered.* 2. Mercies received are *encouragements* to ask, and strong grounds to hope for the mercies we want.

For the first, mercies received are in a *special manner to be remembered.* This has been the method of God's people. David entitles Psalm the 38th, a Psalm *to bring to remembrance* his afflictions; much more then his comforts, *I will remember the years of the*

right hand of the Most High, I will remember the works of the Lord, Psal. 77. 10. 11. Paul remembered a manifestation of God to him fourteen years before, 2 *Cor.* 12. 1. If God treasures up our tears, much more should we treasure up his mercies, as lovers keep the love-tokens of those they affect. God has a file for our prayers, we should have the like for his answers. He has a *book of remembrance* to record our afflictions, and believing discourses of him, *Mal.* 3. 16. Why should not we then have a register for his gracious communications to us? Remembrance is the chief work of a christian; remembrance of sin to cause a self-abhorrency, *There shall you remember your ways, and loathe yourselves, Ezek.* 20. 43, the remembrance of God for a deep humility, *I remembered God and was troubled, Psal.* 77. 3. Remembrance of his name for keeping his law, *Psal.* 119. 55. Remembrance of his judgments of old for comfort in afflictions, *Psal.* 119. 52; and remembrance of mercy for the establishment of faith, *Of whom hast thou been afraid, and hast not remembered me? Isa.* 57. 11. It is observed by some, that Shushan the royal seat of the Persian, was pictured upon the east-gate of the temple, to mind them of the wonder of Purims, *Esth.* 9. 26, the deliverance they had in that place from Haman by God's ordering Mordecai's advancement. Jacob changed the name of Luz into Bethel, that the new name might be a memorial of God's comfortable apparition to him, both to himself and his posterity, *Gen.* 28. 19.

They are to be remembered, because 1. They are the mercies of *God*, They are dispensed out of the treasury of his goodness, wrought by the art of his wisdom, effected by the arm of his power; Christ evidenced this by praying to his Father for the mercies he wanted, by blessing him as the fountain of any mercy received. The great dominion Christ hath is from God; it is first, *Ask of me, Psal.* 2. 8. Yea, though wrought by means. The woman touches

the hem of Christ's garment, but the healing virtue springs from Christ. Men may spread their nets, toil and labour nights, and days, and years, and catch nothing, unless *Christ sends the fish into the net, Luke 5. 5, 6. Our works are in the hands of God, Eccles. 9. 5.* Though our works, yet in God's hand, he pours forth his blessing, he gives success. The first link of the chain of mercy is in God's hand. If we do not then remember them, and him in them, we deny his providence and goodness, and pay that to the servant, which is due to the Lord. *We should remember his love more than wine, Cant.* 1. 4. His love in mercies more than the choicest delights of earth. No gift so small, but is a messenger from the great God, and hath the badge of his name upon it.

2. Mercies purchased by *Christ*. Mercies dear bought by the best blood that ever was in the world. The print of Christ's finger are upon every one of his blessings, the least as well as the greatest. *Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, Cor. 6. 19.* You and your bodies, and the preservation of your bodies; you and what you have, you and your mercies, and your comforts, are all purchased by another, and freely conferred upon you, worthy therefore of remembrance.

3. Mercies beneficial to *us*. We should certainly remember those things whereof we carry the sensible marks upon us.

2. *How* we should remember them.

(1.) Admiringly and *thankfully*. We should observe God's mercies, not only as works but as wonders; *I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember his wonders of old, Psal.* 77. 11, to admire them and the author. Old antedated mercies, as well as fresh, should fill us with new astonishments; not a speculative but an elevating remembrance, to cry out with raised spirits, how great God is, *who is so great a God as our God!* ver. 13. Paul never

looked back upon God's mercies in his conversion without a new admiration; *I thank Jesus Christ our Lord who hath enabled me,* 1 *Tim.* 1. 12. This was not enough, it was a key too low for so great a mercy, till he rises up into an high doxology; *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever,* ver. 17. What an heaven sparkles here in Paul's language so like that of glory; Shall we not have thankful frames in the remembrance of them, when we should stand ready with praise to meet every mercy in its first motion; *Praise waits for thee in Sion, Psal.* 65. 1. Mercy in its first step should not find us a minute without a thankful frame. As God waits for an opportunity to be gracious, we should wait with praise in our mouths to be thankful to him; with the voice of praise should stand ready to meet every shower of mercy. They did not think amiss, that asserted a main part of religion to consist in admiration; this had been the work in innocency. Many other duties have been introduced by a fallen state, this is an entrance into a state of innocency by reassuming the duty of that state, an entrance into the state of heaven by beginning the work of it; this is the eternal religion. Not a bullock nor a goat was to be killed for a man's own table in the wilderness, but they were to bring it *to the door of the tabernacle, and offer an offering to the Lord,* if not, they were accounted murderers, *Lev.* 17. 3, 4. God must be acknowledged in all.

(2.) *Affectionately.* What a deep print of love did the kindness of Christ stamp upon many whose diseases he cured upon the earth! We then rightly remember them, when they raise choice affections to God in us. It was God's promise; *Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, thou shalt know no other God but me, Hos.* 13. 4: Love no God, acknowledge no God but me, because I have brought you out of the land of Egypt, and maintained you by a con-

stant succession of merciful streams of benefits. We begin to love God by the knowledge faith gives us of him; but the experience of his mercy renders him more amiable, and the consideration of it should render our love more lively. Our very common mercies should not be thought of without affection, much less our spiritual. The deliverance of our bodies from death, deserves a return of love; much more the redemption of our souls: Remember them warmly, so as to kindle a flame of love: That is not properly remembered, that works not a suitable impression in the review of it; he rather forgets his sin, that remembers it without a disaffection to it; and he his mercies, that thinks of them without being raised in affection to God by them.

Obediently and fruitfully. David upon the remembrance of it, would *walk before God in the land of the living*. They are given to encourage us in his service, and should be therefore remembered to that end. Rain descends upon the earth, not that it might be more barren, but more fertile. We are but stewards; the mercies we enjoy, are not our own, and therefore to be improved for our master's service. Great mercies should engage to great obedience. God begins the decalogue with a memorial of that mercy in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt; *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, Exod.* 20. 2. How affectionately doth the psalmist own his relation to God as his servant, when he considered how God had loosed his bonds; *Oh Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds, Psal.* 116. 16; the remembrance of thy mercy shall make me know no relation but that of a servant to thee.

When we remember what wages we have from God, we must withal remember that we owe more service, and more liveliness in service to him. Duty is but the ingenuous consequent of mercy. It is irrational to encourage ourselves in our way to hell

by a remembrance of heaven, to foster a liberty in sin by a consideration of God's bounty. When we remember all that we have or are, is the gift of God's liberality, we should think ourselves obliged to honour him with all that we have, for he is to have honour from all his gifts. It is a sign we aimed at God's glory in the begging mercy, when we also aim at God's glory in the enjoying of it. It is a sign love breathed the remembrance of a mercy into our hearts, when at the same time it breathes a resolution into us to improve it. It is not our tongues, but our lives must praise him; mercies are not given to one member, but the whole man. Thanks without obedience is but flattery, it is but Hail master, while we crown him with thorns.

(4.) *Humbly.* Remembrance of free mercies should not be attended with a forgetfulness of our own sinfulness; nor increase our pride, but our humiliation. When Peter saw so great a stock of fish driven into the net, he had the lowest thoughts of himself, *Luke* 5. 8. He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, *I am a sinful man, O Lord.* What a gracious frame is that, when the remembrance of mercy brings us upon our knees to a humble confession of sin? Kindness makes wicked men more proud, and good men more broken. We are usually as lead melted in the fire of affliction, and hardened in the fresh air of prosperity, and grow inactive; but let it be otherwise.

(5.) In the *circumstances.* As circumstances adorn our actions, so they beautify God's mercies, the manner, the time, &c. Every line in mercy owns God as the author as well as the whole mass. Mercy beaten to pieces, as spice, will yield a sweeter scent than in the lump. Remember what misery preceded the mercy; as it made the mercy the sweeter, so it will make the remembrance of it more savoury, *I will give her her vineyard from thence, that is, from the wilderness; then shall she sing as in the day of her youth, Hos.* 2. 15. *Thy heart shall meditate*

terror, *Isa.* 33. 18. Thou shalt consider what thy troubles were, and what the frame of thy heart was, and what thy vows and resolutions were in thy distress. It is good to call to mind what desires, what fervency in prayer there was before the mercy came, and upon the remembrance of the mercy to act the same fervour over again.

6. *Argumentatively* and *fiducially.* But this leads to the next observation.

Doct. 2. That mercies received are *encouragements* to ask, and ground to hope for, the mercies we want. In *spiritual* blessings it certainly holds; they are earnests of other blessings of the same kind, and as it were obligations wherein God binds himself to bestow greater blessings hereafter. They are but further confirmations of his promise for encouragement of our faith. As *whatsoever is written in scripture, is for our* comfort and our *hope. Rom.* 15. 4; so as much as God hath performed of scripture to us, is for the same end.

In *temporal* mercies. God intends them to his people as means to settle their faith faster on him, and make them trust him in future exigencies. When God commands Jacob to remove to another place, he puts him in mind how he was with him, *when he fled from the face of his brother Esau, Gen.* 35. 1. It is an argument Moses used to God, when he was in a great anger against the Israelites; *Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt until now, Numb.* 14. 19; i. e. Thou hast preserved them notwithstanding their murmurings. Upon this argument, though Moses had used others before, God presently answers, *I have pardoned according to thy word.* How ready was God to yield to motions of mercy, when his former kindness to them was pleaded? Paul thus acts faith on God; *Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver;* what is the consequence? *in whom we trust that he will yet deliver*, 2 *Cor.* 1. 10. And the psalmist makes this medium to tie his two petitions together; *Hear me when I call,*

thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress, have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer, Psal. 4. 1, and expresseth his confidence from his experience of former deliverances, that he should have a quick answer at any time. *The Lord will hear me, when I call upon him.* ver. 3.

For, 1. There is as great an *ability* in God when we are in need of new mercies, as there was when he gave former ones. Nay as much as there was from eternity. He is not a God whose arm is shortened, that is not what he was, or shall ever cease to be what he is; *Is my hand shortened at all that I cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver? Isa.* 59. 2. He is always *I am that I am.* There is no diminution of light in the sun, no more than there was at the first moment of its creation, and the last man upon the earth shall enjoy as much of it as we do now. No more doth the Father of lights lose by imparting it to others. Thus we light many candles at a torch, yet it burns never the dimmer. Standing waters may be drawn dry, but a fountain cannot. God is a spring, this day and to morrow, Jehovah unchangeable.

The God of Isaac is not like Isaac that had one blessing and no more, he hath as much now as he had the first moment that mercy streamed from him to his creature, and the same for as many as shall believe in Christ to the end of the world. Nay, the more we receive from God in a way of faith, the more God hath for us. A believer's harvest for present mercies is his seed-time for more. The more mercies he reaps, the more hopes of future mercy he hath. God's mercies when full blown, seed again and come up thicker. Can the creature want more than the everlasting fountain can supply? Can the creature's indigency be greater than God's sufficiency? What an irrational way of arguing was that, *He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out; can he give bread also, can he provide for his people? Psal.* 78. 20. As if he that filled their cup, could not spread their table

as if he that had a hidden cellar for their drink, had not a secret and as full a cupboard for their meat. Do we want mercies for soul and body? Look to the rock whence former mercies were hewn; the same fulness can supply again.

2. There is as much *tenderness* in God as there was before. His power is more unquestionable with us, than his goodness. We think his compassions come short of his ability. We question more his will, than his strength; *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean, Mat.* 8. 2. If thou wilt, thou canst give me mercy as well as before. You may be sure Christ will speak still the same language, I will. I will give thee spirituals and temporals, so far as are good for thee. His *bowels can no more be straitened*, than his arm is shortened; *his compassions fail not, Lam.* 3. 22. All his attributes are alike essential to him: As he cannot but be God, so he cannot but be powerful; he cannot but be true; his truth lies pledged for the constancy of his good will to them that trust in him. Let your condition be what it will, there is some promise to suit it; there is a foundation for faith to beg; and his truth is engaged to make good one promise as well as another: he is a Father, a tender Father, surpassing in tenderness all natural affections; no kind father does ever tell his child, I will do no more for you; the heavenly Father will not, who delights more in giving than we do in receiving: God's love is not as ours, a sudden passion, but a resolve of eternity.

3. There is the *same ground* to beg and believe for mercies we want, as there was for the mercies we have received. We are under the same covenant, the influence of the same Mediator. Should not our faith be more abundant, since we have more evidences of the graciousness of God, the prevalency of the Mediator, and stability of the covenant? Was it not upon this account you did plead with God for what you had before? Were not your arguments drawn from

God's name, his covenant, his Son? They are arguments that can never want a force while God is God; they are as unanswerable as ever. Will God disown his name, deny his promise, overlook his Son? Doth the covenant reach only to those mercies we have received? Did Christ purchase no more? Then indeed our expectations may dolefully flag, we may take our leaves of ever hoping for mercy from him. But his promise is for this life, all the parts of it, and for that which is to come. It hath been tried millions of times, and always found sound, *The word of the Lord is as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, Psal.* 12. 6; seven times, multitudes of times; seven being a number of perfection: it hath been tried in many furnaces of affliction.

It is an everlasting covenant, God's name is his self, and endures for ever. The blood of Christ is of infinite value; the Mediator is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; the same in his affection to his people; the same in his prevalency with God; the plea therefore upon this account, is as firm for all mercies, and for all times; Christ's blood was fain to pay for the mercies you have received; the mercies we expect to eternity are conveyed to us this way, so are the mercies we expect in time. The believers of old had what they had upon these accounts: these arguments have always been used, and have been of force to prevail; the same arguments shall always be used, and have the same efficacy: the covenant, the blood of the covenant, reacheth far beyond what we have, though it be never so great in this world.

4. One mercy in spirituals is to no purpose *without further mercies.* God would not lay a foundation, and not build upon it; he is not light and uncertain in his actions: he knew before he gave the first spiritual mercy, what charge you would be to him; he sat down and counted all; and he cannot be disappointed, since nothing can happen but what he did foresee: To what purpose should one forgive a debtor

a part of the debt, and lay him in prison for the remainder? To what purpose should God begin to heal a leprous soul, and take away a part of the disease, if he did not intend to master all, and expel the fumes of it? To what purpose hath God given Christ to any, if he did not intend *freely to give all things* necessary with him? *Rom.* 8. 32. All temporals are but dross and dung in comparison of him. Has God been at so much charge for you, at the expence of his Son's blood, and did he not stick there? What then can limit the mercy of God? Upon these accounts then, former mercies, especially spiritual, are good arguments to plead with God, and good grounds of hope and trust in him for future ones.

First. Take heed of *forgetting* mercies received. Keep a catalogue of mercies to quicken your love, wind up your thankfulness, and encourage your faith. We can remember ourselves, when we pray for mercy, and forget God, when we receive it, and the mercy itself not long after. We cannot profit by mercies, unless we thankfully remember them; direct rays convey not so much warmth without reflecting back upon the sun. *God remembers the kindness of our youth to him, Jer.* 2. 2. Why should not we remember the tenderness of his grace to us? Great comforts must be especially remembered, they come but seldom; Paul had but one special rapture in fourteen years. Let every new mercy call the old to mind. The mercy of the Lamb put them in mind of his mercy to Moses, and the Israelites, *Rev.* 15. 3. *Bless the Lord from the fountain of Israel, Psal.* 38. 26, i. e. from the very first mercy. Remember also the impressions God makes upon your souls under the first influence of your mercies. Keep them alive and fresh, it is a way to procure more from God, when he beholds such valuations of them.

Let us observe therefore God's motions to us in mercy, and see how he walks with us, and our motions to God in duty, to see how we walk with him,

especially in the mercies which are fruits of prayer. Hannah called her son, which she had received as an answer of prayer, Samuel, that in hearing the name, she might remember God's kindness.

1. Without a remembrance of them we shall be very apt to distrust God, and abate in our love. The death of our experiences is the resurrection of our distrust. When we write mercies in the sand, the next wind makes the letters invisible, and our fears terrible. When the Israelites forgot that power that had provided for them, their corruption took heart to express itself in murmuring; *Can he spread a table in the wilderness, Psa.* 79. 19. If you remember the time when you were cast down in sorrow, and found God raising you up and embracing you in the arms of a tender love, such a remembrance would not easily admit jealousies of him into the room with it; unless you have ceased to be his followers and given him cause to withdraw his care. God breaks not with us till we break with him. When David had drawn a catalogue of God's former mercies towards him, he concludes it with a *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* and takes up resolutions to stick to God in holy affections, *and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, Psal.* 23. 6.

2. Without a remembrance of them we cannot so well improve them. If we do not remember what talents of mercy we have, how can we employ them? what account can we give to the supreme Lord of whom we receive them? An account there must be, for God cannot be conceived in reason to be careless whether his blessings were improved, and regardless whether the fruit of his mercy lost or not, we are accountable for the mercies received by our ancestors, that we have the knowledge of, much more for our own. God brings an indictment against Eli for sinning against the first mercy to Aaron; *Did I plainly appear to the house of thy fathers, when they were in*

Egypt in Pharoah's house, 1 *Sam.* 2. 17. The debt due from our fathers must be paid by the heirs; as we enjoy the profit of them, it is fit we should pay our great Creditor; much more for those immediately bestowed upon us, superadded to what is derived by succession. How can we do either without remembrance? If we forget them, we must needs forget the hand that gave them and the gratitude we owe for them, and hereby not only become false to our Creator ourselves, but make his mercies prove false to the end for which he sent them. The end of every mercy is to glorify God; *I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Psal.* 50. 15; what glorifying God with forgetfulness of what he wrought for us?

3. Without a remembrance of them we shall not so easily resist temptations. An ingenuous spirit under a sense of mercy could not easily lend an ear to an enticing temptation, and be drawn to do wickedness and sin against the author of his mercy. *Shall I thus requite the Lord, who hath made and established me, Deut.* 32. 6. Moses intimates the forgetting this to be the ground of their unworthy usage of God. Have I thus learned Christ, did mercy drop any such instruction into me to sin? If I had not been a subject of his mercy, I had not now lived to be tempted; and shall I live by that mercy to embrace a temptation? *Since thou hast given us such a deliverance as this, shall we again break thy commandments*, saith good Ezra, chap. 9. 13. The goodness of God is to lead us to repentance, how would the remembrance of it strengthen us against a temptation?

Secondly. Make *use* of former mercies to encourage your trust for the *future*. Was it God's end in giving us mercies to encourage our jealousies of his faithfulness, or our hopes of his goodness? It is fit we should trust God upon his bare word, much more upon a trial of him. If we can say, God hath delivered, and therefore he will deliver, why may we not with as good reason say, we have trusted God,

and will trust him still? We have not only heard, how faithful and good he is, but we have also seen, known it, found him to be so. If after the knowledge of his name we trust him not, we have a frame contrary to that which should be in all believers; *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee, Psal.* 9. 10. If we trust him not after mercies received, he may well reproach us for our jealousy; what? did I ever fail you, did you seek my face in vain, have you found me false to you; nay, have I not been good to you above your expectations? What iniquity then is there in me, that you should have any suspicious thoughts of my goodness? With what haste doth David catch at Goliah's sword, when Abimelech told him there was none but that in the tabernacle? *There is none like that, give it me,* 1 *Sam.* 21. 9, as having experienced God's former kindness by it. Moses would show the rod of God, the rod whereby he had wrought wonders, when he prayed for the discomfiture of Amalek, *Exod.* 17. 9, as if no mercy could be denied him, when the rod in his hand pleaded the power and kindness of God so many times manifested by it. And Jehoshaphat's prayer is all made up of pleas from ancient mercy and promises. If we do not improve mercies this way,

1. God loseth his glory by us. It is an unreasonable thing if he will not believe him for his word, yet not to believe him for the works' sake, *Believe me for the very works' sake, John* 14. 11. God must be of very low esteem with us, if he cannot be trusted for his word, and deed too. Has God given us many a mercy, and shall we have such dishonourable thoughts as not to trust him? What excuse is there for distrust against the constant stream of his care?

2. We lose the sweetness of mercy. Every mercy looks two ways, it satisfies our present want, and is a pledge of a future store. Every flower of the field, every passage of providence in the whole course of our lives, may yield honey and sweetness. David

could never consider how God had been his help, but he had a new frame of joy in God, *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice, Psal.* 63. 7.

Whenever we find our souls dejected, let us remember God's dealing with us, and with the Psalmist check them, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Psal.* 43. 11. What, O my soul, that hast had so many rich mercies out of the store-house of God's free grace and favour, *why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I will yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

MORTIFICATION.

Rom. 8. 13.

FOR IF YE LIVE AFTER THE FLESH, YE SHALL DIE: BUT IF YE THROUGH THE SPIRIT DO MORTIFY THE DEEDS OF THE BODY, YE SHALL LIVE.

MORTIFICATION OF SIN A UNIVERSAL DUTY.

Explication and division of the text—With cursory observations—What this duty is—Breaking our league with sin—Open hostility against it—Strong resistance—Destroying sin—How to judge of mortification—Not ceasing from some particular sin—Not mere restraints from sin—Sin is mortified when temptation to it does not succeed as formerly—When there are few interruptions in worship—When opposite graces flourish—Mortification of sin essential—Because an unmortified frame is unsuitable to a state of glory—God cannot delight in such—The state of such is against the whole design of the gospel—Exhortation to the duty—To seek the help of the Spirit—Listen to his convictions—Plead the death of Christ—Think of divine precepts—To be jealous of self—Reflect upon natural corruption—And to bless God for any degree of mortifying grace.

THE Apostle having before spoken of justification, by Christ, and shewed the necessity of sanctification, whereby we indeed resemble the holiness of God,

which he shows to be wrought *by the Spirit of God*, which is the band of communion between saints and Christ, who raises them both from sin here, and the grave hereafter, and that we are not debtors to the flesh, that we should follow the suggestions of that; but to the Spirit, to observe his inspirations. He then in the text backs his exhortationss with a threatening and a promise; a threatening to excite our industry, and a promise to prevent our dejection; you must not imagine you shall be justified without being sanctified, for if you live after the flesh you shall fall under that eternal death which is due to sin; but if you follow the motions of the Spirit, and endeavour to quench the first sparks of sin, the death of your bodies shall be an entrance into the happy life of your soul.

Flesh. Some by flesh understand the state under the law; others more properly, corrupted nature; *ye shall die*, without hopes of a better life, *but if you mortify the deeds of the body*, the deeds of the body of sin, which is elsewhere called the *body of death*, the first motions to sin, and passionate compliance with sin, which are the springs of corrupt actions. Corrupt nature is called a *body* here, morally, not physically; it consisting of divers vices. as a body of divers members. *Ye shall live;* ye shall live more spiritually and comfortably here, and eternally hereafter.

In the words we may observe, 1. A *threatening; if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.* 2. A *promise; if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* In the *promise* there is, 1. The condition: 2. The reward. In the *condition*, there is, 1. The *act; mortify.* 2. The *object; the deeds of the body.* 1. The cause; the body. 2. The effects; the deeds.

3. The agents; *ye*, and the *spirit;* the principal, *the spirit*; the less principal, *ye*, both conjoined in the work, ye cannot do it without the Spirit, and the Spirit will not do it without your concurrence with him, and your industry in following his motions.

From the *act* we may observe,

1. Sin is *active* in the soul of an unregenerate man. His heart is sin's territory, it is there as in its throne, before the Spirit comes; mortification supposes life before in the part mortified; we call not a stone dead, because it never had life. Justification supposeth guilt; sanctification filth; mortification life preceding those acts.

2. Nothing but the death of sin must *content* a renewed soul. The sentence is irreversible, die it must; no indulgence to be shown to it, no lighter punishment than death; not the loss of a member, but the loss of its life; the ax must be laid to the root, and the knife must be held to the throat. The devils are restrained by the power of God from many sins, which cannot therefore be said to be mortified. As nothing but the death of Christ would satisfy the justice of God, so nothing but the death of sin must satisfy the justice of the soul.

3. *Do mortify;* the time present. Whence observe, as sin must have no pardon, so it must have no reprieve. No such mercy must be extended to it, as to give it a moment's breathing. Dangerous enemies must be handled with a quick severity. If we do not presently kill sin, it may suddenly suck out the blood of our soul.

4. *Do mortify;* it notes a continued act; it must be a quick and an *uninterrupted* severity; the knife must still stick in the throat of sin, till it fall down perfectly dead. Sin must be kept down, though it will rage the more, as a beast with the pangs of death is more desperate.

2. From the *object* observe,

1. Mortification must be *universal;* not one deed, but deeds; little and great must fall under the edge: the brats must be dashed against the wall. Though the main body be routed, yet the wings of an army may get the victory. There are evil dispositions, depraved habits, corrupt affections; we should not spare

a nest of vipers when we find them, being all equally injurious.

2. All actual sins are but the sproutings of *original.* The *body* signifies corrupt nature, *deeds* are the products of it; all the sparks issue from the furnace within; the body gives nourishment to the members, and the members bring supplies to the body. There are outward and inward deeds, acts of the mind, which though not acts of the natural body, yet are acts *of the body of sin, Gal.* 5. 19, 20; *hatred, envyings,* acts which the soul may perform, separate from the body.

3. The greatest object of our revenge is *within us.* Our enemies are those of our own house, inbred, domestic adversaries; our anger is then a sanctified anger when set against our own sins. Our enemy has got possession of our souls, which makes the work more difficult. An enemy may better be kept out, than cast out, when he has got possession. Sin is within us, and is always present with us, *Rom.* 7. 21; it lies in ambush for us in the best duties, and starts out upon every occasion when we would do good, it would cut off all correspondencies with heaven; it is in our reason, in our affections; it encamps in us, round about us, and easily besets us, *Heb.* 12. 1.

3. From the *agents,* ye, *the Spirit,* observe,

1. Man must be *an agent* in this work. We have brought this rebel into our souls; and God would have us make as it were some recompence, by endeavouring to cast it out: as in the law, the father was to fling the first stone against a blasphemous son. We must not be neuters in this work, nor lookers on; it will not be done without, though it cannot be done simply by us; it will not be done without our concurrence, though it cannot be done without a supernatural operation.

Ye, all of ye; it is a universal duty for the subject as well as the object. Ye *carnal* men; there is

no precept given to you to sin, and therefore it is not your duty to sin. The life of sin is your misery, and *the mortification of sin* is your happiness, as well as your duty. Ye *renewed* and *justified* persons. Regeneration doth not privilege sin, or exempt from the mortifying work. Election, and consequently the fruits of it, is *to holiness*, not from it, *Eph.* 2. 4. Vocation and sanctification, whereof mortification is the first step, are perspective glasses, to see to the top of election. Though you have mortified, yet still do it.

3. *Through the Spirit.*

1. Mortification is not the work of nature, it is a spiritual work. Every man ought to be an agent in it, yet not by his own strength; we must engage in the duel, but it is the strength of the Spirit only can render us victorious. The duty is ours, but the success is from God; every believer is *principium activum*, but the Spirit is *principium effectivum*. We can sin of ourselves, but not overcome sin by ourselves; we know how to be slaves, but are unable of ourselves to be conquerors. As God made us first free, so he only can restore us to that freedom we have lost, and doth it by his Spirit, which is a Spirit of liberty.

2. The difficulty of this work is hereby declared; the difficulty is manifested by the necessity of the Spirit's efficacy. Not all the powers on earth, nor, the strength of ordinances, can do it; omnipotency must have the main share in the work. The implantation of grace in the heart is called creation, the perfection of grace is called a victory, both belonging to an almighty power.

2. From the *promise* observe,

1. Heaven is a place for *conquerors only. To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, Rev.* 3. 21. He that will be sin's friend, cannot be God's favourite. The way to eternal life is through conflicts, inward with sin, outward with

the world. There must be a combat before a victory, and a victory before a triumph.

2. The more perfect our mortification, the clearer our *assurance of glory;* the more sin dies, the more the soul lives? the sounder our lives are, the more sensible we are that we do live. The more the enemy flies, the more certainty of an approaching victory.

3. Mortification is a *sure sign* of saving grace. It is a sign of the Spirit's in-dwelling and powerful acting, a sign of an approach to heaven.

Doct. The doctrine to be hence insisted on is this, *Mortification of sin is an universal duty, and the work of the Spirit in the soul of a believer, without which there can be no well grounded expectations of eternal life and happiness.*

I do not intend a full discourse of mortification, but in pursuance of a former exhortation of resemblance to the holiness of God, to which this work is necessary: We cannot resemble God, till that which is the hindrance to this resemblance be taken away; and as our deformity is removed, we come nearer to our original pattern; and therefore I shall only show in short what this mortification is, and how we may judge of ourselves, whether we are mortified or no; and that without it there can be no hope of heaven.

1. What mortification *is.*

1. It is a breaking the league we naturally hold *with sin.* Since we were upon ill terms with God, we have kept a constant correspondence with his enemy; and the union between sin and the soul is as strait as that between the flesh and the bones, or the flesh and the blood; blood being in every part of the flesh, and sin in every part of the soul. In regard of this union, sin is called *flesh,* because of its incorporation with flesh. The union between sin and the soul is naturally as great as the union between Christ and a believer, and expressed by the similitudes of marriage, *Rom.* 7. Body and members, root and

branches, as well as the other; it is political too, as between king and subjects.

Sin is therefore said to have dominion, to make laws; whence we read of the law of the members. In regard of this, mortification is expressed by the term of having *no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, Ephes.* 5. 11. A breaking of the conjugal knot. The acquaintance and familiar correspondence with sin are broken off, the communion between sin and the soul is at an end, the common interest wherein they where linked together, is divided; *Res tuas tibi habeto*, the form of the ancient divorce is all the welcome sin hath, *Isa.* 30. 32, *thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.* Or with Ephraim; *What have I to do any more with idols? Hos.* 14. 8. It looks now upon its former favourite as an enemy; sin's yoke that was light, is now burthensome; nothing so much desired as the shaking it off; and that is the object of our antipathy, which before had been the object of the choicest favour. In this regard it is called *a denying of lust, Tit.* 2. 12, a stopping the ears against the importunities of it, and refusing all commerce and cohabitation with it.

2. A declaration of *open hostility.* As leagues between princes are not broken, but a war ensues. The ways of sin are rejected, the dominion of sin opposed, the throne of sin assaulted. The soul is in arms to chase out this usurper, and free itself from its tyranny; and sin up in arms to reduce its subject to its ancient obedience. And here behold that irreconcilable and tedious war, without a possibility of renewing the ancient friendship, and which ends not but with a total conquest of sin. This hostility begins in a bridling corrupt affections, laying a yoke upon any thing that would take part with the enemy; it cuts off all the supplies of sin, stops all the avenues to it; which the apostle expresseth, by *making provision for the flesh, Rom.* 13. 14, &c. a turning the streams which fed sin, another way. As anger is a

degree of murder, and he that hates his brother is a man-slayer, so he that hates sin and proclaims a war against it, hath killed it *affectu*, though not *actu;* He hath attained one degree of mortification, when his anger against it is irreconcilable, like the anger of those that quarrel about a crown, which cannot be ended but by the death of one of the pretenders.

3. A *strong and powerful* resistance; by using all the spiritual weapons against sin, which the christian armoury will afford, the list of which magazine we have, *Ephes.* 6. 13, 14, &c. at the hearing of the word, setting his sin in the front, that the arrows of God may pierce it to the heart, and the two-edged sword may cut the sinews of it asunder; improving baptism, which is a *burial with Christ*, to which end the apostle mentions it, *Rom.* 6. 2, 3. sending up strong cries for the assistance of heaven; as Paul did when he had that thorn in the flesh, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7, redoubling his messages to heaven for a quick supply.

The Apostle expresses this reluctancy against sin by two emphatical words; *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27: ὑωὸπιάζω, ἐλαγωγέπ, *I keep under*, the word signifies, *to take hold of*, or *to gripe* an adversary, as wrestlers do when they would give their antagonist a fall, and lay him flat with the earth; or to *beat* and *pound*, as wrestlers anciently did with their plummets of lead; whence ὑπὸὠπια, a word derived from this in the text,, signifies putrified wounds: And the other word, ἐλαγωγεῖν, signifies to lead *captive*, to *subject* the body to serve God, not lusts, to lead it as a slave, not to endure it as a master; a bringing the affections into order, that they may not contradict and disobey the motions of the Spirit, and sanctified reason.

4. A *killing* of sin. Expressed in the text by mortifying or putting to death; and *Col.* 3. 5. by νεκρώσατε, *mortify:* but the word signifies *to reduce to a carcase;* that though, like a carcase, it may retain the shape, lineaments, and members, that it had living,

yet it hath not the life, strength, and motion it had before. And it is called a *crucifying*, *Gal.* 5. 24, which comprehends all the acts that preceded the crucifying of Christ, which was done with the greatest spite, as much as could be ; the same measures, the same proportions, the same eagerness of spirit are observed ; a total deafness to the cries and complaints of sin, as that of the Jews to the groans of the Lord of life, a crucifying it notwithstanding all it would give in exchange. It is called in scripture by the name of revenge, which ends not without the destruction of the hated person, and sometimes not with it. Every day there is to be a driving a new nail into the body of death, a breaking some limb or other of it, till it expire.

II. The second thing is, how we may judge of our mortification.

Negatively.

1. All cessation from *some particular sin,* is not a mortification. A non commission of a particular sin is not an evidence of the mortification of the root of it. Indeed a man cannot commit all kinds of sin at a time, nor in many years ; the commands of sin are contrary ; and many masters commanding contrary things cannot be served at one and the same time ; pride commands to lavish, and covetousness to hoard ; all sins have their times of reigning in a wicked man, as all graces have their particular seasons of acting according to the opportunities God gives. Hazael abhorred the thoughts of that cruelty the prophet foretold that he should act, *What am I a dog? 2 Kings* 8. 12, 13 ; yet that sin lay hid by him, as Joash by Jehoiada, hoping for the time to play its part and act Hazael as a slave to it. The cessation of a member from motion at present, is no argument either of the death of the body, or the mortification of that member.

(1.) A cessation from one sin may be but *an exchange ;* it may be a divorce from a sin odious to the

world, and an embracing another that hath more specious pretences; as a man may forsake one harlot and fall in league with another. Some sins do not so much affright the conscience, and those may be entertained, when a frowning conscience scares a man from some more abominable. Lusts are *divers, Tit.* 3. 3. A man may cast off the service of one master, and list himself in the service of another; he changes his Lord, without changing his servility. A man cannot be said to be clean, because he has risen out of one sink to drench himself in another.

(2.) This cessation may be from some outward gross acts only, not from a want *of will to sin*, did not some obstacle lay in the way. There may be speculative pride, ambition, covetousness, uncleanness, when they are not externally acted; which is more dangerous, as infectious diseases are, when they are hindered by cold from a kindly eruption, and strike inward to the heart, and so prove mortal. The pollutions of the world may be escaped, when the pollutions of the heart remain. A man may be a fine, garnished, and swept house, and yet an habitation for seven devils worse than reigned there before. The apostle's command for cleansing reaches to the filthiness of the spirit, as well as that of the flesh, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1; we say of the soul, *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat;* so we may of sin; the bias of the soul may run strongly to that sin in affection and pleasure, from the outward acts of which it abstains. It is most dangerous for the house when the fire burns inward. A man may be sooner cured of an outward scald, than an inward heat, which when it comes to a hectic fever, is incurable.

3. It may be a cessation from a sin merely because of the *alteration of the constitution.* Every age hath particular sins which it inclines men to; some sins are more proper to young men, which the apostle calls therefore *youthful lusts*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. Lust reigns in young men, but its empire decays in an old withered

body; some plants which grow in hot countries, will die in colder climates. Ambition decays in age when strength is wasted, but sprouts up in a young man who hath hopes to live many years, and make a flourish in the world. A present sickness may make an epicure nauseate the dainties, which he would before rake even in the sea to procure. There is a cessation from acts of sin, not out of a sense of sin, but a change of the temper of his body.

(4.) A cessation from acts of sin may be *forced*, by some forethoughts of death, some pang of conscience, apprehension of hell, present sense of some scripture threatening, or some sharp and smarting affliction, some signal judgment of God inflicted upon one or other of the companions in sin, which are all of themselves but a kind of force, they being the scourges wherewith God sometimes lasheth a man from the present act of sin. As a present pain in one part of the body may take away a man's stomach to his food, but when the pain is removed, his appetite returns to him. So while a man is upon the rack, and God accusing him, he takes no pleasure, tastes no sweetness in sin, but after these horrors are off, he feeds as heartily as before; nay, sometimes hath a greater stomach; as men after a fit of sickness eat more plentifully, to recover the strength which before they lost by the distemper.

(5.) A cessation from acts of sin, may be for want of an occasion, for want of time, place, and materials. A man's will is not against sin, but he wants an opportunity: this is not from mortifying grace within, but from a providential operation of God, in withholding the materials necessary for the commission of sin. Who will say the sins of drunkenness, gluttony, and oppression, committed by men on earth, are mortified in them, when they are in hell? They want materials, not a nature, nor an affection, to commit the same, were they again upon earth. Grace lies idle many times for want of objects to exercise itself

about ; so doth lust in the heart, like a snake starved with cold, till heated by a temptation. A man's condition in the world is not a sign of this mortification ; there may be grasping and ambitious thoughts in a cottage ; prodigality may be in a poor man's wishes, though not in his power ; yea, and sometimes there is more prodigality in a poor man's unnecessary expence of a penny, than in another's throwing away a pound.

2. *Restraints* from sin are not mortification of it. Men may be curbed, when they are not changed ; and there is no man in the world, but God doth restrain him from more sins which he hath a nature to commit, than what he doth actually commit ; he often hedges up the way with thorns, when he doth not alter the heart by grace ; and doth by his providence hinder the execution of the sinful motions, when he doth not root out the wickedness that lies secretly in the nature. It was an act of God's providence to restrain Abimelech ; *I withheld thee from sinning against me, Gen.* 20. 6. These restraints are mercies God would have us bless him for, but not evidences of mortifying grace.

(1.) Mortification is always from *an inward principle* in the heart, restraints from an outward. A restraint is merely a pull-back, as a man is hindered from doing a mischief by a stronger power. But mortification is from a strength given, a new mettle put into the soul, both a courage and strength to resist it ; there is a *strength in the inward man, Eph.* 3. 16. In a renewed man there is something beside bare considerations, to withhold him, something of antipathy which heightens and improves those considerations, whereby the soul is glad of them, because the edge and dint of them is against sin ; whereas a man barely restrained, would fain stop the entrance of such thoughts ; or when they are entered, would turn them out of doors again ; they are things merely put into him, that have no welcome, neither do they change the will, but put a little stop, to alter the me-

thod of proceedings. Mortifying grace finds something in the nature, as there is in the nature of a fountain to work out the mud, when dirt is cast in to infect it.

(2.) True mortification proceeds from an *anger with, and a hatred* of sin, whereas restraints are from a fear of the consequence of sin; as a man may love the wine, which is as yet too hot for his lips. But mortification proceeds from an anger, a desire of revenge, hence sin is called an abomination to a good man, as well as to God; which signifies an intense and well heated anger. It is not only a passionateness, upon some disappointment in sin, or a tasting the bitterness of it, may be vented against it, which is short-lived, and quickly allayed, as the sea after a storm; but it is a rooted revenge, which is the sweetest passion, and accomplished by many projects and contrivances. A man tastes a sweetness in giving blow after blow to sin, as before he took a pleasure in, and had friendship with it.

(3.) Mortification is a *voluntary, rational* work of the soul; restraints are not so. The devil hath nothing of his nature altered, but hath as strong an inclination to sin as ever, though the act he intends is often hindered by God; as in the case of Job, his malice was as great before to do him a mischief; but God puts a bar upon him, and refuses him a licence, *Job* 1. 10. Now if that grace which hinders be no more than what a devil hath, it no more argues a man mortified, than the devil's forbearance of sin argues him mortified, and recovering his angelical state.

We may judge of our mortification positively.

1. When upon a *temptation that did usually excite the beloved lust, it does not stir*, it is a sign of a mortified state. As it is a sign of the clearness of a fountain, when after the stirring of the water the mud doth not appear. Peter's sin seems to be self-confidence, but it was a sign of a greater mortification of it, that when Christ pressed him to declare his love in that demand; *Lovest thou me more than these? John*

21. 15, he would not vaunt his love to Christ to be greater than the rest of his brethren's; his answer goes no further than, *yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee*, without adding more than these. As it is with a man that is sick, set the most savoury meat before him, which before he had a value for, if he cannot taste it, and his appetite he not provoked by the sight, it is an argument of the strength of his distemper, and where it is lasting, of his approaching death; so when a man hath a temptation to sin, decked and garnished with all the allurements the devil can dress it with, and he hath no stomach to close with it, it is a sign of a mortified frame.

It is a sign of the power of sin, when upon the fair offer it makes, and the alluring baits it lays, the affections to it are presently stirred; it is an evidence of a connaturality and a mighty agreement between that sin and the heart, when upon every spark it takes fire; it is a sign man was *filled with all unrighteousness*, and had not only a few loose corns about him; so on the contrary, when upon the least motion of temptation, that was wont to have the gates open for it, the affections rise against it, and upon the least alarum, all run to the walls to defend them, and forbid the entrance; it is an evidence of the weakness of that lust that kept before a correspondence with such temptations; and the greater evidence it is, when the temptation is high and yet vigorously resisted; as when a spring tide is high, and blown in with the wind, it is an argument of the strength and firmness of the bank, to keep it out from entering upon the ground; whereas, when a man is carried away by every temptation, as marshy ground is drowned at every tide, it is a sign that there is no mortifying grace at all, but a great friendliness between sin and the heart. None will question the deadness of that tree at the root, which doth not bud upon the return of the spring sun; nor need we question the weakness of that corruption, which doth not stir upon the presenting a suitable temptation.

2. When we meet with few *interruptions* in duties of worship. The multitude of such diversions, and an easiness to comply with them, is a sign of an unmortified frame; as it is the sign of much weakness in a person, and the strength of his distemper, when he is not able to hold fast any thing, or when the least blow makes him let go his hold. In duty we are to lay fast hold on God, *Heb.* 6. 18, and join ourselves to the Lord, *Isa.* 55. 3; it is a weak union when every puff of wind is able to separate us. When the starting of sin in us, doth easily turn us from our course, it argues either our credulity to believe its enticements, or our affection to love its allurements, and also the force and strength of sin; as the frequent starting of an enemy from woods, and fastnesses to obstruct our passage, is a sign of some strength remaining, and of more than some few scattered troops, rather some well-bodied army. The more there is of a man's self, flesh, unspiritualness in any service, the more there is of an unmortified temper. The sprouting up of such fruits argues much juice and sap at the root; especially when the eruptions of sins are more numerous and vigorous than the resistances of them. But when the heart can run its race in a service with some freedom, and the interruptions from the flesh are few, and languishing, it is a sign it hath met with a weakening wound; they are rather gasps of corruption, than any strong attempts.

3. When we bring forth the fruits of the *contrary graces*, it is a sign sin is mortified. It is to this end that sin is killed by the Spirit, that fruit may be brought forth to God: the more sweet and full fruit a tree bears, the more evidence there is of the weakness of those suckers which are about the root, to hinder its generous productions. Believers are called vines and olives planted in a fair soil, and God the husbandman, who waters and dresses, prunes and cuts off the luxuriant branches that he may have fruit, and *fruit meet for him, John* 15. 1, 2. The more fruit is

brought forth, the greater sign that the soul is purged, and whatsoever is an enemy to that fruit, is cut off and weakened. The more nature doth rise to the exercise of acts proper to it, the more the strength of the disease that oppressed it, is wasted. Every exercise of grace is both a discovery of the weakness of sin, and a fresh blow given to it, for the wounding of it.

III. The *reasons* why there can be no expectation of eternal life without mortification, are,

1. An unmortified frame is *unsuitable to a state of glory.* There must be a *meetness* for a state of glory, before there be an *entrance into it*, *Col.* 2. 12. Vessels of glory must be first seasoned with grace. Conformity to Christ is to fit us for heaven. He descended to the grave, and there laid his infirmities, before he ascended into heaven; so our sins must die before our souls can mount. It is very unsuitable for sin's drudges to have a saint's portion. A fleshly state is unfit for a spiritual life. All men are under the power of the devil, or under the power of Christ; the world lies ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, under the power of the devil, 1 *John* 5. 19. He that hath the wicked spirit ruling in him, and not cast out with all his accomplices, by the Spirit of God, cannot hope to have a friend's privilege, but an enemy's punishment. A fleshly palate cannot relish an heavenly life; *Thou savourest not the things that be of God, Matt.* 16. 23. Where there is no savour of God in this world, but only of what is contrary to God, there cannot be a savour of him in another world. Every vessel must be emptied of its foul water, before it can receive that which is clean. No man pours rich wine into old casks.

2. God cannot in any wise *delight* in an unmortified soul. To delight in such would be to have no delight in himself and his own nature; the less the degrees of our mortification, the less God doth delight

* Camero.

in us; *He hath no pleasure in wickedness:* the more maims, diseases, rottenness, any have, the less pleasure there is. Sin is a mire; the more miry we are, the less can God embrace us, *Psa.* 5. 4. It is a plague, the more it spreads, the less will he be conversant with us. The more of a swinish, viperous, serpentine nature, the less of God's affections. Sin represents us more monstrous in God's eyes than the filthiest things in the world can do in man's; to keep sin alive is to defend it against the will of God, and to challenge the combat with our Maker.

3. Unmortified sin is against the whole design of the gospel, and death of Christ. As though the death of Christ were intended to indulge us in sin, and not to redeem us from it. That sin should die, was the end of Christ's death: rather than sin should not die, Christ would die himself. It is an high disesteem of Christ, to preserve the life of sin in spite of the death of the Redeemer; and if we defend what he died to conquer, how can we expect to enjoy what he died to purchase? It is a contempt of his death, not to look after that mortifying grace, which was the purchase of so deep a passion. The grace of the gospel of God more especially teaches this lesson, *To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, Tit.* 12. 4. Grace in God was the motive to him, not to account the blood of Christ too dear for us, and therefore should teach us not to account the blood of our sins too dear for him. The tenor of the gospel is, that a man without mortification has no interest in Christ, and therefore no right to glory, *Psa.* 5. 4. It is an inseparable character of them *that are Christ's, that they have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,* i. e. they are Christ's that are under the power of his death, not they that only hold the opinion of his death; or they are Christ's that are truly planted into the likeness of his death, *Rom.* 6. 5.

IV. The use of exhortation.

Let us *labour* to mortify sin. If we will not be

the death of sin, sin will be the death of our souls. Though the allurements of sin may be pleasant, the propositions seemingly fair, yet the end of all is death, *Rom.* 5. 21. Death was threatened by God, and executed upon Adam; death must be executed upon our sins, in order to the restoration of the eternal life of our souls. Love to everlasting life should provoke us, fear of everlasting death should excite us to this, the two most solemn and fundamental passions that put us upon action. *Why will you die, Ezek.* 11. was God's expostulation; why shouldst thou, oh my soul, for a short vanishing pleasure, venture an eternal death? should be our expostulation with ourselves. This would be a curing our disease, bring our soul into that order in part, which was broken by the fall; by this the power of that tyrant that first headed and maintained the faction against God, would be removed, and the soul recover that liberty and life it lost by disobeying of God. This would conduce to our peace; we have then a sprouting assurance, when we are most victorious over our lusts; after every victory, God gives us a taste of the *hidden manna, Rev.* 2. 17. Unmortified lusts do only raise storms and tempests in the soul; less pains are required to the mortification of them, than to the satisfaction of them. Sin is a hard task-master; there must be a pleasure in destroying so cruel an inmate. Gratitude engages us: God's holiness and justice bruised Christ for us, and shall not we kill sin for him? An infinite love parted with a dear Son, and shall not our shallow, finite love part with destroying lusts? We cannot love our sins so much as God loved his Son; he loved him infinitely; If God parted with him for us, shall not we part with our sins for him? He would have us kill it, because it hurts us; the very command discovers affection, as well as sovereignty; and minds us of it as our privilege as well as our duty. And to engage us to it, he hath sent as great a person to help us, as to redeem us, viz. his Spirit; he sent one to

merit it, and the other to assist us in it, and work it in us, who is to bring back the creature to God, by conquering that in it, which hath so long detained it captive. And therefore to this purpose,

1. Implore the help of the *Spirit*. Whenever we set seriously upon this work at any time, let us apply ourselves to the Spirit of God, as one in office to this end, as being a Spirit of holiness, not only in his nature, but in his operations, *Eph.* 1. 13. *Rom.* 1. 4. The Father and the Son are not so often called holy as the Spirit, who is called the *holy* Spirit, and the *Holy* Ghost; not that he is more holy than the other persons, but in regard of his office to work holiness in the hearts of men. As Jehoshaphat, upon the assault from the enemy, cried unto God for deliverance, so upon any arming of our corruptions we should cry to the Spirit for assistance; he doth as much delight to be our auxiliary on earth, as Christ doth to be our advocate in heaven. The neglects of application to him are the cause of our miscarriages; we are half persuaded to a sin, before we beg strength against it.

2. Listen to the *convictions* of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to convince by shaking the soul out of its carnal lethargy. As the Spirit gives a strong alarm at the first conversion, whereby the soul sees the strength of its enemy, and the greatness of its danger, its own impotency and inability to contest with it; so upon carrying on the degrees of mortification, there are various alarms to put us upon a holy watchfulness against the projects of sin. Listen to these convictions which come in by the word, which is the ministration of the Spirit, and in respect to the spiritual energy of it, is called spirit, *John* 6. 63.

3. Plead the *death* of Christ. The end of his death was to triumph over sin. As to take away the guilt of sin, he was the righteousness of God; so to take away the dominion of sin, he is the power of God; his expiation of sin, and his condemnation of it, were twisted together in his sacrifice for sin, or as

a sacrifice for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh, Rom.* 3. 8; and the consideration of his death, and the end of it, would inflame us to desire not to be under the power of a condemned malefactor. A consideration of his death, and that sin had its hands imbrued in his blood, would awaken our love to him, and an indignation against his enemy.

4. Let us often think of divine *precepts.* The frequent meditation on the law of God, would excite our endeavours after a principle more conformable to the purity of that law. God's commands establish not men's humours, neither do they gratify men's lusts, but are suited to the holy nature of God, a conformity to which ought to be our aim in mortification.

5. Let us be jealous of *our own hearts.* Venture not to breathe in corrupt air for fear of infection. There is a principle in the heart naturally disposed to take fire upon the spark of a temptation. A strict watch in a city hinders foreign correspondence, and intestine treachery.

6. Let us often think deeply of the *corruption of our natures,* how loathsome it is to God; and this will make it loathsome to us. The more it is abominated, the more it is mortified; the supplies of it are cut off, its attempts discovered. When Paul considered his misery by the body of death, it strengthened his resolution of serving God *with the law of his mind, Rom.* 17. 24, 25, which must needs be accompanied with a strong resistance of the law of his members.

7. Let us *bless God* for whatsoever mortifying grace we have received, though never so little. When we pay him in praise what we receive of him, it is the way to have more from him. David grew hot against Nabal after he had received his churlish answer, 1 *Sam.* 25, and resolved the murder of the whole family, which he had no authority to do; but God prevents him by Abigail's intercession; he blesses God for the success of it, in hindering his intentions; and

as God prevented his sin, after his thanksgiving he took away the occasion of his evil resolution, by calling Nabal ten days after into another world, ver. 38, and gives him further occasion of praise, ver. 39. A little strength owned as the gift of God, shall be supported with more. Praising God for what we receive, as well as praying for what we want, is a means to promote the mortification of our sins in order to eternal life.

THE

SINFULNESS AND CURE

OF

THOUGHTS.

Gen. 6. 5.

AND GOD SAW THAT THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN WAS GREAT IN THE EARTH, AND THAT EVERY IMAGINATION OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY.

PART I.

EVIL THOUGHTS.

Evil thoughts of God—Debasing—Accusing—Presumptuously curious—Evil thoughts of ourselves—Ambitious—Self confident—Vain imaginations—Immoderate thoughts about lawful things—Evil thoughts concerning others—Envious—Censorious Jealous—Revengeful—These evil thoughts aggravated in their guilt by delighting in them—By continuance—By re-action—Proof of their sinfulness—They are contrary to law The order of nature and design of creation—Man is accountable to God for his thoughts—The fruitfulness of sinful thoughts—Their number—Conformity to Satan—Odiousness to God—Reproof—Exhortation.

I KNOW not a more lively description in the whole book of God, of the natural corruption derived from our first parents, than these words; wherein you have

the ground of that *grief*, which lay so close to God's heart, ver. 6, and the resolution to destroy man, and whatsoever was serviceable to that ungrateful creature. That must be highly offensive, which moved God to repent of a fabric so pleasing to him at the creation: every stone in the building being at the first laying pronounced *good* by him, and upon a review at the finishing the whole, he left it the same character with an emphasis; *very good*, *Gen.* 1. 31. There was not a part in the whole frame, but was *very beautiful*, and being wrought by infinite *wisdom*, it was a very comely piece of art, **Eccles.* 3. 11. What then should provoke him to repent of so excellent a work? *The wickedness of man, which was great in the earth.* How came it to pass that man's wickedness should rise so high? Whence did it spring? From the *imagination.* Though these might be sinful imaginations, might not the superior faculty preserve itself untainted? Alas; that was defiled; *The imagination of the thoughts* was evil. But though transient thoughts might revolve in his mind, yet they might leave no stamp or impression upon the will and affections. Yes they did, *The imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil.* Surely all could not be under such a blemish: Were there not now and then some pure emotions of the mind? No not one; *Every imagination.* But granting that they were evil, might there not be some fleeting good mixed with them: as a poisonous reptile hath something useful? No, *only evil.* Well, but there might be some intervals of thinking, and though there was no good thought, yet evil ones were not always there. Yes, they were *continually;* not a moment of time that man was free from them. One would scarce imagine such a mass of internal wickedness, but God hath affirmed it; and if any man should deny it, his own heart would give him the lie.

Let us now consider the words by themselves,

* Πειοικαλλες τεκνηργημα. Euseb. Præpar. Evang.

יצר *Imagination*, properly signifies *figmentum*, from יצר to afflict, press, or form a thing by compression. And thus it is a *metaphor* taken from a *potter's* framing *a vessel*, and extends to whatsoever is framed inwardly in the heart, or outwardly in the work. It is usually taken by the Jews for that fountain of sin within us; * *Mercer* tells us, it is always used in an evil sense: But there are two places (if no more) wherein it is taken in a good sense; † *Whose mind is stayed; Isa.* 26. 3; and 1 *Chron.* 29. 18, where *David* prays, that a disposition to offer willingly to the Lord might be preserved in the *imagination of the thoughts of the heart of the people.* Indeed for the most part, it is taken for the imaginations of the heart, as *Deut.* 31. 21. *Psal.* 103. 14, *&c.* The Jews make a double figment, a good and bad; and fancy two angels assigned to man, one bad, another good: which *Maimonides* interprets to be nothing else but natural corruption, and reason. This word *imagination* being joined with *thoughts*, implies not only the complete thoughts, but the first motion or formation of them, to be evil.

The word *heart* is taken variously in scripture. It signifies properly that inward member, which is the seat of the vital spirits, but sometimes it signifies, 1. The *understanding* and *mind; With a double heart do they speak, Psal.* 12. 2, i. e. with a double mind, *Prov.* 8. 5. 2. For the *will; All that is in my heart, 2 Kings* 10. 30, in my will and purpose. 3. For the *affections*, as, *Thou thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, i. e. with all thy affections. 4. For *conscience, David's heart smote him, 2 Sam.* 24. 5, i. e. his conscience checked him. But *heart* here is used for the whole soul, because (according to *Pareus's* note) the soul is chiefly seated in the heart,

* Alii rectius dicunt non esse יצר nisi in malum. Merc. in loc.

† יצר הסוב יצר הרע יצר-סמוך Maimon. More Novoch. Par. 3. c. 22. Amam. Censur. in locum.

especially the will, and the affections her attendants; because when any affection stirs, the chief motion of it is felt in the heart. So that by the *imaginations of the thoughts of the heart*, are here meant all the inward operations of the soul, which play their part principally in the heart, whether they be the acts of understanding, the resolutions of the will, or the operations of the affections.

Only evil. The vulgar mentions not the exclusive particle רַק, and so enervates the sense of the place. But our neighbour translations either express it as we do only, or to that sense, that they were certainly, or no other than evil.

Continually evil. The Hebrew, *all the day* or *every day*. Some translations express it *verbatim* as the Hebrew. Not a moment of a man's life, wherein our hereditary corruption doth not belch out its froth, even from his youth, as God expounds it, *Gen.* 8. 21, to the end of his life.

Whether we shall refer the general wickedness of the heart in the text to that age, as some of the Jesuits do; because after the deluge, God does not seem so severely to censure it, or rather take the exposition the learned Rivet gives of it, referring the first part of the verse, *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth*, to those times, and the second part to the universal corruption of man's nature, and the root of all sin in the world. The Jesuit's argument will not be very valid, for the extenuation of original corruption, from *Gen.* 8. 21. For if man's imaginations be evil *from his youth*, what is it but in another phrase to say they were so *continually?* But suppose it to be understood of the iniquity of that age, may it not be applied to all ages of the world? David complains of the wickedness of his own time, *Psal.* 14. 3; & 5. 9. Yet Paul applies it to all mankind, *Rom.* 3. 12. Indeed it seems to be a description of man's natural depravity, by God's words after the deluge, *Gen.* 8. 21, which are the same in sense, to

shew that man's nature, after that destroying judgment, was no better than before. Every word is emphatical, exaggerating man's defilement; wherein consider the universality,

1. Of the subject, *every man.* 2. Of the act, every thought. 3. Of the qualification of the act, only evil. 4. Of the time, continually. The words thus opened afford us this proposition;

That the thoughts, and inward operations of the souls of men, are *naturally universally evil,* and highly provoking.

Some by cogitation mean not only the acts of the understanding, but those of the will, yea, and the sense too. But indeed that which we call cogitation, or thought, is the work of the mind; *imagination,* of the fancy.* It is not properly thought, till it be wrought by the understanding, because the fancy was not a power designed for thinking, but only to receive the images impressed upon the sense, and concoct them, that they might be fit matter for thought; and so it is the exchequer, wherein all the acquisitions of sense are deposited, and from thence received by the intellective faculty. So that thoughts are *inchoative* in the fancy, *consummative* in the understanding, *terminative* in all the other faculties. Thought first engenders opinion in the mind; thought spurs the will to consent or dissent; it is thought also which spirits the affections.

I will not spend time to acquaint you with the methods of their generation. Every man knows he hath a thinking faculty, and some inward conceptions, which he calls thoughts, he knows that he thinks, and what he thinks; though he be not able to describe the manner of their formation in the mind, or remember it any more than the species of his own face in a glass. In this discourse let us first see what kind of thoughts are sins.

1. Negatively. *A simple apprehension* of sin is not

* Cartes. Princip. Philos. Part. 1. Sect. 9.

sinful. Thoughts receive not a sinfulness barely from the object; that may be unlawful to be acted, which is not unlawful to be thought of. Though the will cannot will sin without guilt, yet the understanding may apprehend sin without guilt; for that does no more contract a pollution by the bare apprehension, than the eye does by the reception of the species of a loathsome object. Thoughts are morally evil, when they have a bad *principle*, want a due *end*, and converse with the object in a wrong *manner*. Angels cannot but understand the offence which displaced the apostate stars from heaven, but they know not sin *cognitione practica;* glorified saints may consider their former sins, to enhance their admirations of pardoning mercy. Christ himself must needs understand the matter of the devil's temptation; yet Satan's suggestions to his thoughts were as noisome vapours mixed with the sun-beams, without any defilement of them. Yea, God himself, who is infinite purity, knows the object of his own acts, which are conversant about sin; as his holiness in forbidding it, wisdom in permitting, mercy in pardoning, and justice in punishing. But thoughts of sin in Christ, angels, and glorified saints, are accompanied with an abhorrence of it, without any combustible matter in them to be kindled by it. As our thoughts of a divine object are not gracious, unless we love and delight in it; so a bare apprehension of sin is not positively criminal, unless we delight in the object apprehended. As a sinful object does not render our thoughts evil, so a divine object does not render them good; because we may think of it with undue circumstances, as unseasonably, coldly, &c. And thus there is an imperfection in the best thought of a regenerate man, for though I will suppose he may have sudden ejaculations without the mixture of any positive impurity, and a simple apprehension of sin, with a detestation of it, yet there is a defect in each of them; because it is

not with that raised affection to God, or intense abhorrence of sin, as is due from us to such objects, and whereof we were capable in our primitive state.

2. Positively. Our thoughts may be branched into first motions, or such that are more voluntary.

First motions are unfledged thoughts, and single threads, before a multitude of them come to be united, and woven into a discourse: such as skip up from our natural corruption, and sink down again as fish in a river. These are sins, though we consent not to them; because, though they are without our *will*, they are not against our *nature*, but spring from an inordinate frame, of a different hue from what God implanted in us. How can the first sprouts be good, if the root be evil? Not only the thought formed, but the very formation, or first imagination, is evil. Voluntariness is not necessary to the *essence* of a sin, though it be to the *aggravation* of it. It is not my will or knowledge, which makes an act sinful, but God's prohibition. Lot's incest was not ushered by any deliberate consent of his will; yet who will deny it to be a sin, since he should have exercised a severer command over himself than to be overtaken with drunkenness, which was the occassion of it, *Gen.* 19. 33, 35. Original sin is not *effective* voluntary in infants; because no act of the will is exerted in an infant about it: yet it is voluntary *subjective*; because it does *inhærere voluntati*. These motions may be said to be voluntary negatively, because the will does not set bounds to them, and exercise that sovereign dominion over the operations of the soul, which it ought to do, and wherewith it was at its first creation invested. Besides, though the will does not immediately consent to them, yet it consents to the occasions, which administer such motions; and therefore, according to the rule, that *causa causæ est causa causati*, they may be justly charged upon our score.

Voluntary thoughts, which are the blossoms of these motions, are such that have no lawful object,

no right end, not governed by reason, eccentric, disorderly in their motions, and like the jarring strings of an untuned instrument. The meanest of these floating fancies are sins; because we act not in the production of them as rational creatures: and what we do without reason, we do againstthe law of our creation, which appointed reason for our guide, and the understanding to be τὸ ηγεμονικὸν, the governing power in our souls.

These were reduced to three heads,—1. In regard of God. 2. Of ourselves. 3. Of others.

I. In regard of *God.*

1. *Cold* thoughts of God; when no affection is raised in us by them. When we delight not in God, the object of those thoughts, but in the thought itself, and operation of our mind about him, consisting of some quaint notion of God of our own conceiving. This is to delight in the act or manner of thinking, not in the object thought of; and thus these thoughts have a folly and vanity in them. They are also sinful in a regenerate man, in respect of the faintness of the understanding, not acting with that vigour and sprightliness, nor with those raised and spiritual affections, which the worth of such an object requires.

2. *Debasing* conceptions, unworthy of God. Such are called in the heathen, vain imaginations;* who, as they glorified not God as God, so they did not think of God as God, according to the dignity of a Deity. Such a mental idolatry may be found in us when we dress up a god according to our own humours, humanize him, and ascribe to him what is grateful to us, though never so base.† Which is a grosser degrading of the Deity, than any representation of him by material images; because it is directly against his holiness, which is his glory, applauded chiefly by the angels; and an attribute which he swears by, as

* Rom. 1. 21. διαλογισμοις, their reasonings about God.

† Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, Psal. 50. 21. Exod. 15. 11. Isa. 6. 3. Psal. 89. 35.

having the greatest regard to the honour of it. Such an imagination Adam seemed to have, conceiting God to be so mean a being, that he, a creature not of a day's standing, could mount to an equality of knowledge with him.

3. *Accusing* thoughts of God; either of his *mercy*, as in despair; or of his *justice*, as too severe, as in Cain, *Gen.* 4. 13. Of his *providence:* Adam conceited, yea and charged God's providence to be an occasion of his crime:* his posterity are no juster to God, when they accuse him as a negligent Governor of the world. *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity, Psal.* 94. 11. What thoughts? Injurious thoughts of his providence, ver. 7, as though God were ignorant of men's actions: or, at best, but an idle spectator of all the unrighteousness done in the world, not to regard it, though he saw it. And they in the prophet were of the same stamp, that said in their hearts, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil, Zeph*, 1. 12. From such kind of thoughts, most of the injuries from oppressors, and murmurings in the oppressed, do arise.

4. *Curious* thoughts about things too high for us. It is the frequent business of men's minds to flutter about things without the bounds of God's revelation. Not to be content with what God hath published is to accuse him, in the same manner as the serpent did to our first parents, of envying us an intellectual happiness.† Yet how do all Adam's posterity long after this forbidden fruit!

II. In regard of *ourselves;* our thoughts are,

1. *Ambitious:* the aspiring thought of the first man runs in the veins of his posterity. God took notice of such strains in the king of Babylon, when he said in his heart, *I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will ascend above the heights of the*

* The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, Gen. 3. 12.

† God knows that your eyes shall be opened, Gen. 3. 5.

clouds; I will be like the Most High, Isa. 14. 13,14. No less a charge will they stand under, that settle themselves upon their own bottom, *establish their own righteousness, and will not submit to the righteousnesss of God's appointment, Rom.* 10. 3. The most forlorn beggar has sometimes thoughts vast enough to grasp an empire.

2. *Self-confident:* Edom's thoughts swelled him into vain confidence of a perpetual prosperity.* And David sometimes said in the like state, that he should never be moved.

3. *Self-applauding:* either in the vain remembrances of our former prosperity, or ascribing our present happiness to the dexterity of our own wit. Such flaunting thoughts had Nebuchadnezzar at the consideration of his settling Babylon the head, and metropolis of so great an empire.† Nothing more ordinary among men, than overweening reflections upon their own parts, and *thinking of themselves above what they ought to think.*

4. Ungrounded imaginations of the events of things, either *present or future:* such wild conceits, like meteors bred of a few vapours, do often frisk in our minds. 1. Of things present: it is like Eve, who foolishly imagined she had brought forth the Messiah, when she had brought forth a murderer; *I have gotten a man, the Lord, Gen.* 4. 1, as in the Hebrew, believing, as some interpret, that she had brought forth the promised seed. And such a conceit Lamech seems to have had of Noah, *Gen.* 5. 29. 2. Of things to come, either in bespeaking false hopes, or antedating improbable griefs. Such are the sanguine thoughts we have of a happy estate in reversion, which yet we may fall short of. Haman's heart

* That saith in his heart, who shall bring me down to the ground, Obad. 3.

† Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, &c. Dan. 4. 30.

leaped at the king's question, *What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?* fancying himself the mark of his prince's favour, without thinking that a halter should soon terminate his ambition. Or perplexing thoughts at the fear of some trouble, which is not yet fallen upon us, and perhaps never may. How did David torture his soul by his unbelieving fears, that he should *one day perish by the hand of Saul?* 1 *Sam.* 27. 1. These forestalling thoughts do really affect us; we often feel perturbation in our spirits upon imaginary hopes, and conceited fears. These pleasing impostures, and self-afflicting suppositions are signs either of an idle or indigent mind, that has no will to work, or only rotten materials to work upon.

5. *Immoderate* thoughts about lawful things: when we exercise our minds too thick, and with a fierceness of affection above their merit; not in subserviency to God, or mixing our cares with dependencies on him. Worldly concerns may quarter in our thoughts; but they must not possess all the room, and thrust Christ again into a manger; neither must they be of that value with us, as the law was with David, *sweeter than the honey, or the honey comb.*

III. In regard of *others;* all thoughts of our neighbour against the rule of charity. Such that *imagine evil in their hearts, God hates, Zech.* 8. 17. These principally are, 1. *Envious,* when we torment ourselves with others' fortunes. Such a thought in Cain, upon God's acceptance of his brother's sacrifice, was the prologue to, and foundation of that cursed murder. 2. *Censorious,* stigmatizing every freckle in our brother's conversation. 3. *Jealous,* and *evil surmises* contrary to charity, which *thinks no evil* 4. *Revengeful;* such made Haman take little content in his preferments, as long as Mordecai refused to court him. And Esau thought of the days of mourning for his father, that he might be revenged for his brother's deceits.

There is no sin committed in the world, but is

hatched in one or other of these thoughts. But beside these, there are a multitude of other volatile conceits, like swarms of gnats buzzing about us, and preying upon us, and as frequent in their successions, as the curlings of the water upon a small breath of wind, one following another close at the heels. The mind is no more satisfied with thoughts, than the first matter is with forms, continually shifting one for another, and many times the nobler for the baser: as when upon the putrefaction of a human body, part of the matter is endued with the form of vermin. Such changeable things are our minds, in leaving that which is good for that which is worse, when they are inveigled by an active fancy, and bedlam affections. This *madness is in the hearts of men while they live*, and starts a thousand frenzies in a day. At the best our fancy is like a carrier's bag, stuffed with a world of letters, having no dependence upon one another; some containing business, and others nothing but froth.

In all these thoughts there is a further guilt in three respects, viz. 1. Delight, 2. Contrivance, 3. Reacting.

1. *Delight* in them. The very tickling of our fancy by a sinful motion, though without a formal consent, is a sin; because it is a degree of complacency in an unlawful object. When the mind is pleased with the subject of the thought, as it hath a tendency to some sensual pleasure, and not simply in the thought itself, as it may enrich the understanding with some degree of knowledge. The thought indeed of an evil thing may be without any delight in the evil of it; as philosophers delight in making experiments of poisonous creatures, without delighting in the poison, as it is a noxious quality. We may delightfully think of sin without guilt, not delighting in it as sin, but as God by his wise providential ordering, extracts glory to himself, and good to his creature. In this case, though a sinful act be the *material* object of this pleasure, yet it is not the *formal* object: because the delight is not terminated in the sin, but

in God's ordering the event of it to his own glory. But an inclination to a sinful motion, as it gratifies a corrupt affection, is sin: because every inclination is a malignant tincture upon the affections, including in its own nature an aversion from God, and testifying sin to be an agreeable object. And without question, there can be no inclination to any thing, without some degree of pleasure in it: because it is impossible we can incline to that, of which we have a perfect abhorrence.

Hence it follows, that every inclination to a sinful motion is *consensus inchoatus*, or a consent in embryo: though the act may prove abortive. If we think of any unlawful thing with pleasure, and imagine it either in *fieri* or *facto esse*, it brings a guilt upon us, as if it were really acted. As when upon the consideration of such a man's being my enemy, I fancy robbers rifling his goods, and cutting his throat, and rejoice in this revengeful thought, as if it were really done, it is a great sin: because it testifies an approbation of such barbarity, if any man had will and opportunity to commit it. And though it be a supposition, yet the act of the mind is really the same it would be, if the sinful act I think of were performed. Or when a man conditionally thinks with himself, I would steal such a man's goods, or kill such a person, if I could escape the punishment attending it, it is as if he had robbed and murdered him: because there is no impediment in his will to the commission of it, but only in the outward circumstances. Nay, though it be a mere *ens intentionale*, or *rationis*, which is the object of the thought, yet the act of the mind is real, and as significant of the inclination of the soul, as if the object were real too: as if a man has an unclean motion at the sight of a picture, which is only a composition of well-mixed and well-ordered colours: or at the appearance of the idea of a beauty framed in his own fancy: it is as much uncleanness as if it were terminated in some suitable object, the hinderance

being not in the will, but in the insufficiency of the object to concur in such an act. Now as the more delight there is in any holy service, the more precious it is in itself, and more grateful to God: so the more pleasure there is in any sinful motion, the more malignity there is in it.

2. *Contrivance.* When the delight in the thought grows up to the contrivance of the act, which is still the work of the thinking faculty: when the mind broods upon a sinful motion, to hatch it up, and invents methods for performance; which the wise man calls *artificial inventions. Eccl.* 7. 29, חשבנות. So a learned man interprets διαλογισμοὶ πονηροὶ, *Mat.* 15. 19, of contrivances of murder, adultery, &c. * And the word signifies properly *reasonings.* When men's wits act a Satanic part in their souls, in inventing sophistical reasons for the commission and justification of their crimes, with a mighty jollity at their own craft. Such plots are the trade of a wicked man's heart. A covetous man will be working from morning till night to study new methods for gain:† and voluptuous and ambitious persons will draw schemes and models in their fancy, of what they would outwardly accomplish: *They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepares deceit, Job* 15. 35. Hence the thoughts are called the counsels, 1 *Cor.* 4. 5, and devices, *Isa.* 32. 7. 8, of the heart, when the heart summons the head, and all the thoughts of it, to sit in debate as a private junto, about a sinful motion.

3. *Re-acting* sin after it is outwardly committed. Though the individual action be transient, and cannot be committed again; yet the idea and image of it remaining in the memory, may by the help of an apish fancy be repeated a thousand times over with a rarified pleasure: as both the features of our friends, and agreeable conversations we have had with them,

* Dr. Hammond on Mat. 15. 9.

† 2 Pet. 2. 14. καρδιαν γεγυμνασμενην πλεονεξιας, a heart exercised in covetous practices.

may with a fresh relish be represented in our fancies, though the persons died many years ago. *

Having thus declared the nature of our thoughts, and the degrees of their guilt: the next thing is to prove that they are sins.

The Jews did not acknowledge them to be sins, unless they were blasphemous, and immediately against God himself. Some heathens were more orthodox, and among the rest Ovid, whose amorous pleasures one would think should have smothered such sentiments in him. The Lord (whose knowledge is infallible) knows the *thoughts of men that they are vanity, Psa.* 94. 11, yea, and of the wisest men too, according to the apostle's interpretation, 1 *Cor.* 3. 20. And who were they that *became vain in their imaginations*, but the wisest men the carnal world yielded?

The Grecians the greatest philosophers, the Egyptians their tutors, and the Romans their apes. The elaborate operations of an unregenerate mind are *fleshly, Rom.* 8. 5, 7. If the whole web be so, needs must every thread. *The thought of foolishness is sin*, (i. e. a foolish thought; not objectively a thought of folly, but one formally so) yea, *an abomination to God.*

As good thoughts and purposes are acts in God's account, so are bad ones. Abraham's intention to offer Isaac is accounted as an actual sacrifice, *Heb.* 11. 17; that the stroke was not given, was not from any reluctance of Abraham's will, but the gracious indulgence of God. Sarah had a deriding thought, and God chargeth it as if it were an outward laughter, and a scornful word. † Thoughts are the words

* Kimchi in Psa. 66: as quoted by Grotius in Mat. 5. 20. Ut jam sirvaris bene corpus adultera measest. Nec custodiri, ni velit, ille potest. Nec mentem servare potes, licet omnia claudas. Omnibus occlusis intus adulterit. Ovid. Amor. l. 3. Eleg. 3. v. 5, &c.

† Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, בקרבה in visceribus suis, Targium, Gen. 18. 12, 13. I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet, Rom. 7. 7.

of the mind, and as real in God's account, as if they were expressed with the tongue.

There are three reasons for the proof of this, that they are sins.

1. They are contrary to the *law*, which doth forbid the first foamings and belchings of the heart; because they rise from an habitual corruption, and testify a defect of something, which the law requires to be in us, to correct the excursions of our minds. Doth not the law oblige man as a rational creature? Shall it then leave that part, which doth constitute him rational, to fleeting and giddy fancies? No, it binds the soul as the principal agent, the body only as the instrument. For if it were given only for the sensitive part, without any respect to the rational, it would concern brutes as well as men, which are as capable of a rational command, and a voluntary obedience, as man without the conduct of a rational soul. It exacts a conformity of the whole man to God, and prohibits a deformity; and therefore engages chiefly the inward part, which is most the man. It must then extend to all the acts of the man, consequently to his thoughts, they being more the acts of the man than the motions of the body. Holiness is the prime excellency of the law, a title ascribed to it twice in one verse; *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good, Rom.* 7. 12. Could it be holy, if it indulged looseness in the more noble part of the creature? Could it be just, if it favoured inward unrighteousness? Could it be good, and useful to man, which did not enjoin a suitable conformity to God, wherein the creature's excellency lies? Can that deserve the title of a spiritual law, that should only regulate the brutish part, and leave the spiritual to an unbounded licentiousness? Can perfection be ascribed to that law, which doth countenance the unsavoury breathings of the Spirit, and lay no stricter an obligation upon us than the laws of men? Must not God's laws be as suitable to

his sovereignty, as men's laws are to theirs? Must they not then be as extensive as God's dominion, and reach even to the most private closets of the heart? It is not for the honour of God's holiness, righteousness, goodness, to let the Spirit, which bears more flourishing characters of his image than the body, range wildly about without a legal curb.

2. They are contrary to the *order of nature, and the design of our creation.* * Whatsoever is a swerving from our primitive nature, is sin, or at least a consequent of it. But all inclinations to sin are contrary to that righteousness, wherewith man was first endued. Man was created both with a disposition and ability for holy contemplations of God; the first glances of his soul were pure; he came every way complete out of the mint of his infinitely wise and good Creator; and when God pronounced all his creatures good, he pronounced man very good amongst the rest. But man is not now as God created him, he is off from his end, his understanding is filled with lightness and vanity. This disorder never proceeded from the God of order; infinite goodness could never produce such an evil frame; none of these loose inventions were of God's planting, but of man's seeking. No, God never created the intellective, no, nor the sensitive part, to play Domitian's game, and sport itself in the catching of flies; *Man that is in honour, and understands not* that which he ought to understand, and thinks not that which he ought to think, *is like the beasts that perish, Psa.* 49,20; *Gen.* 3.6; he plays the beast, because he acts contrary to the nature of a rational and immortal soul. And such brutes we all naturally are, since the first woman believed her sense, her fancy, her affection, in their directions for the attainment of wisdom, without consulting God's law or her own reason. The fancy was bound by the

* God made man perfect; but they have sought out many inventions, Eccles. 7. 29.

right of nature to serve the understanding. It is then a slighting God's wisdom to invert this order, in making that our governor which he made our subject. It is injustice to the dignity of our own souls, to degrade the nobler part to a sordid slavery; in making the brute have dominion over the man, as if the horse were fittest to govern the rider. It is a falseness to God, and a breach of trust, to let our minds be imposed upon by our fancy: in giving them only feathers to dandle, and chaff to feed on, instead of those braver objects they were made to converse withal.

3. We are *accountable* to God, and punishable for thoughts. Nothing is the meritorious cause of God's wrath but sin. The text tells us, that they were once the keys which opened the floodgates of divine vengeance, and broached both the upper and nether cisterns, to overflow the world. If they need a pardon, as certainly they do, then, if mercy does not pardon them, justice will condemn them. And it is absolutely said, that *a man of wicked devices,* or thoughts, *God will condemn, Prov.* 12. 2. * It is God's prerogative, often mentioned in scripture, *to search the heart.* To what purpose, if the acts of it did not fall under his censure, as well as his cognizance? *He weighs the spirits, Prov.* 16. 2, in the balance of his sanctuary, and by the weights of his law, to sentence them, if they be found too light. The word doth discover, and judge them; *It divides asunder the soul and spirit, Heb.* 4, 12, 13, the sensitive part the affections, and the rational the understanding and will; both which it dissects, and opens, and judges the acts of them, even the *thoughts and intents,* ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν, whatsoever is within the ψυχης, and whatsoever is within the πνος, the one referring to the soul, the other to the spirit; these it passes a judg-

* מזמות איש, A man of thoughts, i. e. evil thoughts, the word being usually taken in an ill sense. Κριτικος.

ment upon; as a critic censures the *erratas*, even to syllables and letters, in an old manuscript. These we are to render an account of, (as the Syriack renders those words, *with whom we have to do*, ver. 13.) Of what? Of the first bubblings of the heart, the motions and intents of it. The least speck and atom of dust in every chink of this little world is known and censured by God. If our thoughts be not judged, God would not be a righteous judge. He would not judge according to the merit of the cause, if outward actions were only scanned, without regarding the intents, wherein the principle and end of every action lies, which either swell or diminish the malignity of it.

Actions, in kind the same, may have different circumstances in the thoughts to heighten the one above the other; and if they were only judged, the most painted hypocrite might commence a blessed spirit at last, as well as the exactest saint. It is necessary also for the glory of God's omniscience. It is hereby chiefly that the extensiveness of God's knowledge is discovered, and that in order to the praise or dispraise of men, viz. to their justification or condemnation. Those very thoughts will accuse thee before God's tribunal, which accuse thee here before conscience, his deputy; *Their thoughts the mean while*, i. e. in this life, while conscience bears witness, *accusing or excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men*, *Rom.* 2. 15, 16; i. e. and also at the day of judgment, when conscience shall give in its final testimony, upon God's examination of the secret counsels. This place is properly meant of those reasonings concerning good and evil in men's consciences, agreeable to the law of nature imprinted on them, which shall excuse them, if they practise accordingly, or accuse them, if they behave themselves contrary thereunto. But it will hold in this case; for if those inward approbations of the notions of good and evil will accuse us for our contrary prac-

tices, they will also accuse us for our contrary thoughts.* Our good thoughts will be our accusers for not observing them, and our bad thoughts will be indictments against us for complying with them.

It is probable the soul may be bound over to answer chiefly for these at the last day; for the apostle chargeth Simon's guilt upon his thought, not his word, and tells him, pardon must be principally granted for that. The tongue was only an instrument to express what his heart did think, and would have been wholly innocent, had not his thoughts been first criminal. What therefore is the principal subject of pardon, would be so of punishment: as the first incendiaries in a rebellion are most severely dealt with. And if (as some think) the fallen angels were stripped of their primitive glory, only for a conceived thought, how heinous must that be, which hath enrolled them in a remediless misery?

Having proved that there is a sinfulness in our thoughts, let us now see what provocation there is in them; which in some respects is greater than that of our actions. But we must take actions here in *sensu diviso*, as distinguished from the inward preparations to them. In the one there is more of scandal; in the other more of odiousness to God. God indeed does not punish thoughts so visibly, because, as he is governor of the world, his judgments are shot against those sins that disturb human society: but he hath secret and spiritual judgments for these, suitable to the nature of the sins.

Now thoughts are greater in respect,

1. Of *fruitfulness*. The *wickedness that God saw great in the earth* was the fruit of *imaginations*. They are the immediate causes of all sin. No cockatrice but was first an egg. It was a thought to be as God, that was the first breeder of all that sin, under

* Non solum opus, sed mali operis cogitatio pœnas luet. Hieron. in Hosea 7. Acts 8. 32.

which the world groans at this day; for Eve's mind was first *beguiled* in the alteration of her thought, 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. Since that the lake of inward malignity acts all its evil by these smoking steams. Evil thoughts lead the van in our Saviour's catalogue, as that which spirits all the black regiment which march behind, *Mat.* 15. 19. As good motions cherished will spring up in good actions, so loose thoughts favoured will break out in visible plague-sores, and put fire unto all that wickedness which lies habitually in the heart: as a spark may to a whole stock of gunpowder. The vain babblings of the soul, as well as those of the tongue, *will increase to more ungodliness.*

Being thus the cause, they include virtually in them all that is in the effect; as a seed contains in its little body the leaves, fruit, colour, scent, which afterward appear in the plant. The seed includes all, but the colour doth not virtually include the scent, or the scent the colour, or the leaves the fruit: so it is here, one act doth not include the formal obliquity of another; but the thought which caused it, doth seminally include both the formal and final obliquity of every action; both that which is in the nature of it, and in the end to which it tends. As when a tradesman cherisheth immoderate thoughts of gain, and in the attaining it runs into *many foolish and hurtful lusts*, there is cheating, lying, swearing, to put off the commodity: all these several acts have a particular sinfulness in the nature of the acts themselves, besides the tendency they have to the satisfying an inordinate affection; all which are the spawn of those first immoderate thoughts stirring up greedy desires.

2. In respect of *quantity*. Imaginations are said to be continually evil. There is an infinite variety of conceptions, as the psalmist speaks of the sea, *wherein are all things creeping innumerable, both small and great*, and a constant generation of whole shoals of them; that you may as well number the fish in the

sea, or the atoms in the sunbeams, as recount them.

There is a greater number in regard of the acts, and in regard of the objects.

1. In regard of the *acts* of the mind:—*Antecedent* acts. How many preparatory motions of the mind are there to one wicked external act?* Yea, how many sinful thoughts are twisted together to produce one deliberate sinful word? All which have a distinct guilt, and, if weighed together, would outweigh the guilt of the action abstractedly considered. How many repeated complacencies in the first motion, degrees of consent, resolved broodings, secret plottings, proposals of various methods, smothering contrary checks, vehement longings, delightful hopes, and forestalled pleasures in the design? All which are but thoughts assenting or dissenting in order to the act intended. Upon a dissection of all these secret motions by the critical power of the word, we should find a more monstrous guilt than would be apparent in the single action, for whose sake all these spirits were raised. There may be no sin in a material act, considered in itself, when there is a provoking guilt in the mental motion. A hypocrite's religious services are materially good, but poisoned by the imagination lurking in the heart, that gave birth to them. It is the wicked mind or thought that makes the *sacrifice* much more an *abomination to the Lord.* †

Consider their number with reference to *consequent* acts; when a man's fancy is pregnant with the delightful remembrance of the sin that is past, he draws down a fresh guilt upon himself, as they did in the prophet, *Ezek.* 23. 3, 19, in reviving the concurrence of the will to the act committed, making the sensual pleasure to commence spiritual, and (if ever there

* Ἂν δὲ σαυτὸηἐνδοθεν ἀνοίξῃς ᾧ ἄνθρωπε, ποίχιλον χ πολυπαθὲς ταμυολυον χαηῶν ἐυρὴσυς χ θηοαυροσμα, &c. Plutarch, Moral. p. (mihi) 500.

† Prov. 21. 27. בתומ with a wicked thought.

were an aching heart for it) revoking his former grief by a renewed approbation of his darling lust. Thus the sin of thoughts is greater in regard of duration. A man has neither strength nor opportunity always to act, but he may always think; and imagination can supply the place of action. Or if the mind be tired with sucking one object, it can with the bee presently fasten upon another. Senses are weary, till they have a new recruit of spirits: as the poor horse may sink under his burden, when the rider is as violent as ever. Thus old men may change their outward profaneness into mental wickedness, and as the psalmist *remembered* his old songs, *Psal.* 77. 5, 6, so they their calcined sins in the night, with an equal pleasure. So that you see there may be a thousand thoughts as ushers and lacquies to one act, as numerous as the sparks of a new lighted fire.

2. In regard of the *objects* the mind is conversant about. Such thoughts there are, and attended with heavy guilt, which cannot probably, no nor possibly descend into outward acts. A man may in a complacent thought commit fornication with a woman in Spain, in a covetuous thought rob another in the Indies, and in a revengeful thought stab a third in America; and that while he is in this congregation. An unclean person may commit a mental folly with every beauty he meets. A covetous man cannot plunder a whole kingdom; but, in one twinkling of a thought he may wish himself the possessor of all the estates in it. A Timon, a μισανθρωπος, cannot cut the throats of all the world; but, like Nero, with one glance of his heart he may cut of the heads of all mankind at a blow. An ambitious man's practices are confined to a small spot of land, but with a cast of his mind he may grasp an empire as large as the four monarchies. A beggar cannot ascend a throne; but in his thoughts he may pass the guards, murder his prince, and usurp the government. Nay further, an atheist may *say in his heart, there is no God, Psa.*

14. 1, i. e. wish there was no God, and thus in thought undeify God himself; though he may sooner dash the heaven and earth in pieces, than accomplish it. The body is confined to one object, and that narrow and proportionable to its nature: but the mind can wing itself to various objects in all parts of the earth. Where it finds none, it can make one; for fancy can compact several objects together, coin an image, colour a picture, and commit folly with it, when it hath done; it can nestle itself in cobwebs spun out of its own bowels.

3. In respect of *strength*, the imaginations of the heart are only, i. e. purely evil. The nearer any thing is in union with the root, the more radical strength it hath. The first ebullitions of light and heat from the sun are more vigorous than the remoter beams: and steams most noisome next that putrified body, than when they are dilated in the air. Grace is stronger in the heart-operations, than in the outward streams: and sin more foul in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart, that in the act. In the text the outward wickedness of the world is passed over with a short expression; but the Holy Ghost dwells upon the description of the *wicked imagination*, because there lay the mass. Man's *inward part is very wickednesses*, במחדרת קד, a whole nest of vipers. Thoughts are the immediate spawn of the original corruption, and therefore partake more of the strength and nature of it. Acts are more distant, being the children of our thoughts, but the grand-children of our natural pravity. Besides, they lie nearest to that wickedness in the inward part, sucking the breast of that poisonous dam that bred them. The strength of our thoughts is also reinforced by being kept in, for want of opportunity to act them: as liquors in close glasses ferment and increase their sprightliness. Musing, either carnal or spiritual, makes the fire burn the hotter; as the fury of fire is doubled by being pent in a furnace.

Outward acts are but the sprouts; the sap and juice lies in the wicked imagination or contrivance, which has strength in it to produce a thousand fruits as poisonous as the former. The members are the instruments or *weapons* of unrighteousness; now the whole strength which manages the weapon lies in the arm that wields it, the weapon of itself could do no hurt without a force impressed. Let me add this too, that sin in thoughts is more simply sin. In acts there may be some occasional good to others, for a good man will make use of the sight of sin committed by others to increase his hatred of it; but in our sinful thoughts there is no occasion of good to others; they lying locked up from the view of man.

4. In respect of *alliance*. In these we have the nearest communion with Satan. The understanding of man is so tainted, that his *wisdom*, the chiefest flower in it, is not only *earthly* and *sensual* (it were well if it were no worse) but *devilish* too, *James* 3. 15. If the flower be so rank, what are the weeds? Satan's devices, and our thoughts, are of the same nature, and are sometimes in scripture expressed by the same word, νοήματα, 1 *Cor*, 2. 11. 2 *Cor*. 10. 5. As he hath his devices, so have we against the authority of God's law, the power of the gospel, and the kingdom of Christ. The devils are called *spiritual wickednesses*, because they are not capable of carnal sins, *Eph*. 6. 12. Profaneness is an uniformity with the world, and intellectual sins are an uniformity with the God of it, *Eph*. 2. 2, 3. There is a double walking, answerable to a double pattern in it; *Fulfilling the desires of the flesh* is a *walking according to the course of this world*, or making the world our copy; and *fulfilling the desires of the mind* is a *walking according to the prince of the power of the air*, ver. 2; or a making the devil our pattern. In carnal sins Satan is a tempter, in mental, an actor. Therefore in the one we are conformed to his will; in the other we are transformed into his likeness. In outward, we evidence more obedience to

his laws; in inward, more of affection to his person, as all imitations of others do. Therefore there is more of enmity to God, because more of similitude and love to the devil; a nearer approach to the diabolical nature implying a greater distance from the divine. Christ never gave so black a character, as that of the devil's children, to the profane world, but to the pharisees, who had left the sins of men to take up those of devils, and were most guilty of those high imaginations which ought to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

5. In respect of *contrariety* and odiousness to God. Imaginations were only evil; and so most directly contrary to God, who is *only good.* Our natural *enmity against God* is seated in the *mind.* The sensitive part aims at its own gratification, and in men's *serving* their *lusts*, they serve their *pleasures;* but the το ἡγεμονικὸν, the prince in man, is possessed with principles of a more direct contrariety; whence it must follow, that all the thoughts and counsels of it are tinctured with this hatred. They are indeed a defilement of the higher part of the soul, and that which belongs more peculiarly to God. And the nearer any part approaches to God, the more abominable is a spot upon it; as to cast dirt upon a prince's house is not so heinous as to deface his image. The understanding, the seat of thoughts, is more excellent than the will; both because we know and judge before we will, or ought to will only so much, as the understanding thinks fit to be willed; and because God has bestowed the highest gifts upon it, adorning it with more lively lineaments of his own image; *Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, Col.* 3. 10; implying, that there was more of the image of God at the first creation bestowed upon the understanding, the seat of knowledge, than on any other part; yea, than on all the bodies of men together.

Father of spirits is one of God's titles: to asperse

his children then, so near a relation, the jewel that he is choice of, must needs be more heinous. He being the Father of spirits, this spiritual wickedness of nourishing evil thoughts, is a cashiering all child-like conformity to him. The traiterous acts of the mind are most offensive to God: as it is a greater despite for a son, to whom the father hath given the greater portion, to shut him out of his house, only to revel in it with a company of rioters and strumpets, than in a child who never was so much the subject of his father's favour. And it is more heinous and odious, if these thoughts which possess our souls, be at any time conversant about some idea of our own framing. It were not altogether so bad, if we loved something of God's creating, which had a physical goodness, and a real usefulness in it to allure us: but to run wildly to embrace an *ens rationis*, to prefer a thing of no existence, but what is coloured by our own imagination, of no virtue, no usefulness, a thing that God never created, nor pronounced good, is a greater enmity, and a higher slight of God.

6. In respect of *connaturalness* and *voluntariness*. They are the imaginations of the thoughts of the *heart*, and they are *continually* evil. * They are as natural as the æstuations of the sea, the bubblings of the fountain, or the twinklings of the stars. The more natural any motion is ordinarily, the quicker it is. Time is requisite to action, but thoughts have an instantaneous motion. The body is a heavy piece of clay, but the mind can start out on every occasion. Actions have their stated times and places; but these solicit us, and are entertained by us at all seasons. Neither day nor night, street nor closet, exchange nor temple, can free us from them; we meet them at every turn, and they strike upon our souls as often as light upon our eyes. There is no restraint for them; the

* Αν τόχθονιος πνγας τ κακίας; Plutarch. Moral. Τάχιστον μὲν νους, διὰ παντος γὲ τρεχει. Thales. Diog. Laert.

laws of men, the constitution of the body, the interest of profit or credit, are mighty bars in the way of outward profaneness: but nothing lays the reins upon thoughts but the law of God; and this man is *not subject to, neither can be, Rom.* 8. 7.

Besides, the natural atheism in man is a special friend and nurse of these; few firmly believing either the omniscience of God, or his government of the world; which the scripture speaks of frequently, as the cause of most sins among the sons of men. Actions are done with some reluctance and checks of natural conscience. Conscience will start at a gross temptation, but it is not frighted at thoughts. Men may commit speculative folly, and their conscience look on, without so much as a nod against it: men may tear out their neighbours' hearts in secret wishes, and their conscience never interpose to part the fray. Conscience indeed cannot take notice of all of them; they are too subtle in their nature, and too quick for the observation of a finite principle. They are *many*, and they are nimble too: like the bubblings of a boiling pot, or the rising of a wave, that presently slides into its level; and as Florus saith of the Ligurians, the difficulty is more to find, than conquer them.* They are secret sins, and are no more discerned than motes in the air without a spiritual sunbeam; whence David cries out, *Cleanse me from secret sins, Psal.* 19. 12: which some explain of sins of thought, that were like sudden and frequent flashes of lightning, too quick for his notice, and unknown to himself. There is also more delight in them. There is less of temptation in them, and so more of election; and consequently there is more of the heart and pleasure in them, when they lodge with us. Acts of sin are troublesome, there is danger as well as pleasure in many of them: but there is no outward danger in

* Florus, l. 2. c. 3. Major aliquanto labor erat invenire, quam vincere.

thoughts; therefore the complacency is more compact and free from distraction. The delight is more unmixed too; as intellectual pleasures are more refined than sensual. All these considerations will enhance the guilt of these inward operations.

The uses I shall make of this subject will be two.

1. *Reproof.* What a mass of vanity should we find in our minds, if we could bring our thoughts in the space of one day, yea but one hour, to account? How many foolish thoughts with our wisdom, ignorant with our knowledge, worldly with our heavenliness, hypocritical with our religion, and proud with our humiliations? Our hearts would be like a grot, furnished with monstrous and ridiculous pictures; or as the wall in Ezekiel's vision pourtrayed with every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts; a greater abomination than the image of jealousy at the outward gate of the altar, *Ezek.* 8. 5, 10. Were our thoughts opened, how should we stand gazing both with scorn and wonder, at our being such a race of fools? Well may we cry out with Agur, *We have not the understanding of men*, *Prov.* 30. 2: we make not the use of them, as is requisite for rational creatures; because we degrade them to attendances on a brutish fancy.

I make no question, but were we able to know the fancies of some irrational creatures, we should find them more noble, heroic, and generous *in suo genere*, than the thoughts of most men; more agreeable to their natures, and suited to the law of their creation. How little is *God in* any of *our thoughts*, according to his excellency? No, our shops, our rents, our temporal interests and gratifications usurp God's room. If any thoughts of God start up in us, how many covetous, ambitious, wanton, revengeful thoughts are jumbled together with them? Is it not a monstrous absurdity to place our friend with a crew of vipers, to lodge a king in a sty, and entertain him

with the fumes of a dunghill? *A wicked man's heart is little worth;* all the peddling wares and works in his inward shop, are not valuable with one silver drop from a gracious man's lips.*

It was an invincible argument of the primitive christians for the purity of the christian religion, above all others in the world, that it prohibited evil thoughts: and is it not as unanswerable an argument that we are no christians, if we give liberty to them? What is our moral conversation outwardly, but only a bare abstinence from sin; not a disaffection? Were we really and altogether christians, would not that which is the chiefest purity of christianity, be our pleasure? And would we any more wrong God in our secret hearts, than in the open streets? Is not thought a beam of the mind, and shall it be enamoured only by that which is vile? Is not the understanding the eye of the soul, and shall it behold only gilded nothings? It is the flower of the Spirit; shall we let every caterpillar suck it? It is as the sun in our heaven; and shall we besmear it with misty fancies? It was created surely for better purposes, than to catch a thousand weight of spiders, as Heliogabalus employed his servants. It was not intended to be made the common sewer of filthiness, or ranked among those ζωα παμφαλα, which eat not only fruit and flesh, but flies, worms, and all sorts of loathsome materials. Let not therefore our minds wallow in a sink of fantastical follies, whereby to rob God of his due, and our souls of happiness.

2. *Exhortation.* We must take care for the suppression of them. All vice arises from imagination. Upon what stock does ambition and revenge grow, but upon a false conceit of the nature of honour? What engenders covetousness, but a mistaken fancy of

* The tongue of the just is as choice silver, &c. Prov. 10. 20. Apud nos & cogitare peccare est. Minucius Fœlix.

the excellencyof wealth? *Thoughts* must be *forsaken* as well as our *way;* we cannot else have an evidence of a true conversion: and if we do not discard them, we are not like to have an *abundant pardon;* and what will the issue of that be, but an abundantpunishment?* Mortification must extend to these: affections must be crucified, and all the little brats of thoughts, which beget them, or are begotten by them. Shall we nourish that, which brought down the wrath of God upon the old world; as though there had not been already sufficient experiments of the mischief they have done? Is it not our highest excellency to be conformed to God in holiness, in as full a measure as our finite natures are capable? And is not God holy in his counsels and inward operations, as well as in his works? Hath God any thoughts but what are righteous and just?

Therefore the more foolish and vain our imaginations are, the more are we *alienated from the life of God.* The Gentiles were so, because they *walked in the vanity of their mind;* and we shall be so, if vanity walk and dwell in ours. As the tenth commandment forbids all unlawful thoughts and desires: so it obliges us to all thoughts and desires, that they may make us agreeable to the divine will, and like to God himself. We shall find great advantage by suppressing them: we can more easily resist temptations without, if we conquer motions within. Thoughts are the mutineers in the soul, which set open the gates for Satan: he has held a secret intelligence with them, so far as he knows them, ever since the fall: and they are his spies to assist him in the execution of his devices. They prepare the tinder, and the next fiery dart sets all on a flame. Can we cherish these, if we consider that Christ died for them? He shed his blood for that which put the

* Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, &c. Isa. 55. 7. Gal. 5. 24.

world out of order, which was accomplished by the sinful imagination of the first man, and continued by those imaginations mentioned in the text. He died to restore God to his right, and man to his happiness: neither of which can be perfectly attained, till those be thrown out of the possession of the heart.

PART II.

THE CURE OF SINFUL THOUGHTS.

Consideration for raising good thoughts—Renewa. of heart—Study of the scriptures—Reflection upon first conversion—Cultivating love to God—Faith—Morning meditation—The matter—The manner of it—Spiritual improvement of surrounding objects—Directions for preventing bad thoughts—To exercise humiliation—Avoid worldly entanglements—Idleness—Sense of God's omniscience—Watching the heart—The duty of christians when evil thoughts intrude—To examine them—Check their first approach—Improve them—Watch and pray against them—Good thoughts to be entertained—Cultivated—To assist meditation—To be recorded—Connected with ejaculation.

FOR the cure of sinful thoughts, let us consider these following directions, 1. For the raising good thoughts. 2. Preventing bad. 3. Ordering bad when they do intrude: 4. Ordering good when they appear in us.

I. For raising *good* thoughts,

1. Get *renewed* hearts. The fountain must be cleansed which breeds the impurity.* Pure vapours can never ascend from a filthy quagmire. What issue can there be of a vain heart, but vain imaginations? Thoughts will not become new, till a man is in Christ. We must be holy, before we can think holily. Sancti-

* 2 Cor. 5. 17. Wash thy heart from wickedness, &c. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? Jer. 4. 14.

fication is necessary for the dislodging of vain thoughts, and the introducing of good. A sanctified reason would both discover, and shame our natural follies. As all animal operations, so all the spiritual motions of our heads, depend upon the life of our hearts* as the *principium originis*. As there is a *law in our members* to bring us into captivity to *the law of sin*, *Rom.* 7. 23; so there must be a *law in our minds* to bring our thoughts to the *obedience of Christ*, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. We must be renewed in the *spirit of our minds*, *Ephes.* 4. 23, in our reasonings and thoughts, which are the spirits whereby the understanding acts; as the animal spirits are the instruments of corporeal motion.

Till the understanding be *born of the Spirit*, it will delight in, and think of, nothing but things suitable to its fleshly original: but when it is spiritual, it receives new impressions, new reasonings and motions, suitable to the Holy Ghost, of whom it is born.† A stone, if thrown upwards a thousand times, will fall backward; because it is a forced motion: but if the nature of this stone were changed into that of fire, it would mount as naturally upward, as before it sunk downward. You may force some thoughts toward heaven sometimes, but they will not be natural, till nature be changed. Grace only gives stability and prevents fluctuation, by fixing the soul upon God as its chief end: and what is our end, will not only be first in our intentions, but most frequent in our considerations.‡ Hence a sanctified heart is called in scripture a *stedfast* heart. There must be an enmity against Satan put into our hearts, according to the first promise, before we can have an enmity against his imps, or any thing that is like him.

2. Study *scripture*. Original corruption fills us with bad thoughts, and scripture-knowledge would

* Prov. 4. 23.

† John 3. 6. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which which is born of the spirit, is spirit.

‡ Heb. 13. 9. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.

stock us with good ones; for it proposes things in such terms, as exceedingly suit our imaginative faculty, as well as strengthen our understanding. Judicious knowledge would make us *approve things that are excellent:* and where such things are approved, toys cannot be welcome. Fulness is the cause of stedfastness. The cause of an intent and piercing eye is the multitude of animal spirits. Without this skill in the word we shall have as foolish conceits of divine things, as ignorant men without the rules of art have of the sun and stars, or things in other countries which they never saw. The word is called *a lamp to our feet, i. e.* the affections: a *light* to our eyes, i. e. the understanding. It will direct the glances of our minds, and the motions of our affections. It *enlightens the eyes,* and makes us have a new prospect of things: as a scholar newly entered into logic, and studied in the predicaments, &c. looks upon every thing with a new eye, and more rational thoughts, and is mightily delighted with every thing he sees; because he eyes them as clothed with those notions he hath newly studied. The devil had not his engines so ready to assault Christ, as Christ from his knowledge had scripture-precepts to oppose him. As our Saviour by this means stifled thoughts offered, so by the same we may be able to smother thoughts arising in us.* Converse therefore often with the scripture, transcribe it in your heart, and turn it *in succum et sanguinem;* whereby a vigour will be derived into every part of your soul, as there is by what you eat to every member of your body. Thus you will make your mind Christ's library, as Hierom speaks of Nepotianus.

3. Reflect often upon the *frame of your mind at your first conversion.* None have more settled, and more pleasant thoughts of divine things than new

*Lectione assidua et meditatione diuturna pectus suum bibliothecam Christi fecerat. Hierom Ep. 3.

converts, when they first receive Christ; partly because of the novelty of their state, and partly because God puts a full stock into them; and diligent tradesmen at their first setting up have their minds intent upon improving their stock. Endeavour to put your mind in the same posture it was then. Or if you cannot tell the time when you first closed with Christ, recollect those seasons wherein you have found your affections most fervent, your thoughts most united, and your mind most elevated; as when you renewed repentance upon any fall, or had some notable clearings from God; and consider what matter it was which carried your heart upward, what employment you were engaged in, when good thoughts filled your soul; and try the same experiment again. Asaph would oppose God's ancient works to his murmuring thoughts: he would remember his song in the night, i. e. the matter of his song, and read over the records of God's kindness. *Psal.* 77. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. David too would never forget, i. e. frequently renew the remembrance of those precepts, whereby God had particularly *quickened him*, *Psal.* 119. 93. Yea, he would reflect upon the places too, where he had formerly conversed with God, to rescue himself from dejecting thoughts; *therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar*, *Psal.* 42. 6. Some elevations surely David had felt in those places, the remembrance whereof would sweeten the sharpness of his present grief. When our former sins visit our minds, pleading to be speculatively reacted, let us remember the holy dispositions we had in our repentance for them, and the thankful frames when God pardoned them. The disciples at Christ's second appearance reflected upon their own warm temper at his first discourse with them in a disguise, to confirm their faith, and expel their unbelieving conceits.* Strive to recollect truths,

* Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scripture? Luke 24. 32.

precepts, promises with the same affection which possessed your souls, when they first appeared in their glory and sweetness to you.

4. Ballast your heart with a *love* to God. David thought *all the day of God's law*, as other men do of their lusts, because he inexpressibly loved it.* This was the successful means he used to stifle *vain thoughts*, and excite his hatred of them; it is the property of love to *think no evil*, 2 *Cor.* 13. 5. It thinks good and delightful thoughts of God; friendly and useful thoughts of others. It fixes the image of our beloved object in our minds, that it is not in the power of other fancies to displace it. The beauty of an object will fasten a rolling eye. It is difficult to divorce our hearts and thoughts from that which appears lovely and glorious in our minds, whether it be God or the world. Love will by a pleasing violence bind down our thoughts, and hunt away other affections. If it does not establish our minds, they will be like a cork, which with a light breath, and a short curl of water, shall be tossed up and down from its station. Scholars that love learning, will be continually hammering upon some notion or other, which may further their progress; † and as greedily clasp it, as the iron will its beloved loadstone: he that is winged with divine love to Christ, will have frequent glances and flights towards him, and will start out from his worldly business, several times in a day, to give him a visit. Love in the very working is a settling grace; it increaseth our delight in God, partly by the sight of his amiableness, which is cleared to us in the very act of loving, and partly by the recompences he gives to the affectionate carriage of his creature; both which will stake down the heart from vagaries, or giving enter-

* O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day, Psal. 119. 97, 113.

† Æneas oculic semper vigilantis inheret. Ænean animo noxque diesque refert. Ovid. Ep. 7. Ὁ εδ ἔρως βιαίον τι ἐσδ. Lucian. Dialog. Πτερωδεια ερανίωἔρωτι. Chrysost.

tainment to such loose companions, as evil thoughts are. Well then, if we had this heavenly affection strong in us, it would not suffer unwholesome weeds to grow up so near it; either our love would consume those weeds, or those weeds will choak our love.

5. Exercise *faith*. As the habit of faith is attended with habitual sanctification, so the acts of faith are accompanied with a progress in the degrees of it. That faith which brings Christ to dwell in our souls, will make us often think of our inmate. Faith realizes divine things, and makes absent objects as present; and so furnishes fancy with richer streams, than any other principle in the world. As there is a necessity of the use of fancy, while the soul is linked to the body; so there is also a necessity of a corrective for it. * Reason does in part regulate it, but it is too weak to do it perfectly, because fancy in most men is stronger than reason; man being the highest of imaginative beings, and the lowest of intelligent; fancy is in its exaltation more than in creatures beneath him, and reason in its detriment more than in creatures above him; and therefore the imagination needs a more skilful guide than reason. Fancy is like fire, a good servant but a bad master; if it march under the conduct of faith, it may be highly serviceable, and by putting lively colours upon divine truth, may steal away our affections to it. *Faith is the evidence of things not seen*, viz, not by a corporeal, but intellectual eye; and so it will supply the office of sense: *It is the substance of things hoped for;* and if hope be an attendant on faith, our thoughts will surely follow our expectations.

The remedy David used, when he was almost stifled with disquieting thoughts, was to excite his soul to a hope and confidence in God, *Psal.* 42. 5; and when they returned upon him, he useth the same diversion, *the peace of God*, ver. 11; i. e. the recon-

* Mirand. de Imaginat. c. 11, 12.

ciliation made by a Mediator between God and us believingly apprehended, will *keep*, or garrison, *our hearts and minds*, or thoughts, against all anxious assaults both from within and without.* When any vain conceit creeps up in you, act faith on the intercession of Christ; and consider, is Christ thinking of me now in heaven, and pleading for me, and shall I squander away my thoughts on trifles, which will cost me both tears and blushes? Believingly meditate on the promises; they are a means to *cleanse us from the filthiness of the spirit*, as well as that of the *flesh*.† If the having them be a motive, the using them will be a means to attain this end. *Looking at the things that are not seen*, preserves us from fainting, and *renews the inward man day by day*,‡ 2 *Cor.* 4, 16, 18. These invisible things could not well keep our hearts from fainting, if faith did not first keep the thoughts from wandering from them.

6. Accustom yourself to a serious meditation *every morning*. Fresh airing our souls in heaven will engender in us purer spirits, and nobler thoughts. A morning seasoning would secure us for all the day. Though other necessary thoughts about our callings will, and must come in, yet when we have dispatched them, let us attend our morning theme as our chief companion. As a man that is going with another about some considerable business, though he meets with several friends in the way, and salutes some, and with others with whom he has some affairs he spends a little time, yet he quickly returns to his companion, and both together go their intended stage. Do thus in the present case. Our minds are active, and will be doing something though to little purpose, and if they be not fixed upon some noble object, they will like madmen and fools be mightily pleased in

* φρουρήσει τα νοήματα ὑμῶν. Phil. 4. 6, 7.

† Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves, &c. 2 Cor. 7. 1.

‡ Intus existens prohibet alienum.

playing with straws. The thoughts of God were the first visitors David had in the morning; God and his heart met together as soon as he was awake, and kept, company all the day after. In this meditation look both to the matter and manner.

1. Look to the *matter* of your meditation. Let it be some truth, which will assist you in reviving some languishing grace, or fortify you against some triumphing corruption; for it is our darling sin which most envenoms our thoughts.* As if you have a thirst for honour, let your fancy represent the honour of being a child of God and heir of heaven. If you are inclined to covetousness, think of the riches stored up in a Saviour, and dispensed by him. If to voluptuousness, fancy the pleasures in the ways of wisdom here, and at God's right hand hereafter. This is to deal with our hearts as Paul with his hearers, to catch them with guile. Stake your soul down to some serious and profitable mystery of religion; as the majesty of God; some particular attribute, his condescension in Christ, the love of our Redeemer, the value of his sufferings, the virtue of his blood, the end of his ascension, the work of the Spirit, the excellency of the soul, beauty of holiness, certainty of death, terror of judgment, torments of hell, and joys of heaven.

Why may not that which was the subject of God's innumerable thoughts, be the subject of ours? God's thoughts and counsels were concerning Christ, the end of his coming, his death, his precepts of holiness, and promises of life; and that not only speculatively, but with an infinite pleasure in his own glory, and the creature's good to be accomplished by him. Would it not be work enough for our thoughts all the day to travel over the length, breadth, height, and depth of the love of Christ? Would the greatness of the journey give us leisure to make any starts out

* As a man thinks in his heart, so is he, Prov. 23. 7.

of the way? Having settled the theme for all the day, we shall find occasional assistances, even from worldly business; as scholars, who have some exercise to make, find helps in their own course of reading, though the book has no designed respect to their proper theme. Thus by employing our minds about one thing chiefly, we shall not only hinder them from vain excursions, but make even common objects to be oil to our good thoughts, which otherwise would have been fuel for our bad. Such generous liquor would scent our minds and conversations all the day; that whatsoever motion came into our hearts, would be tinctured with this spirit, and savour of our morning thoughts: as vessels having been filled with a rich wine, communicate a relish of it to the liquors afterward put into them. We might also more steadily go about our worldly business, if we carry God in our minds; as one foot of the compass will more regularly move about the circumference, when the other remains firm in the centre.

2. Look to the *manner* of it. And first, let it be *intent*. Transitory thoughts are like the glances of the eye, soon on, and soon off; they make no clear discovery, and consequently raise no sprightly affections. Let it be one principal subject, and without flitting from it; for if our thoughts be unsteady, we shall find but little warmth: a burning glass often shifted fires nothing. We must *look at the things that are not seen*, as men do at a mark they shoot at.* Such an intent meditation would change us into the image, and cast us into the mould of those truths we think of; it would make our minds more busy about them all the day: as a glaring upon the sun fills our eyes for some time after with the image of it. To this purpose look upon yourselves as deeply concerned in the things you think of. Our minds dwell upon that whereof we apprehend an absolute necessity. A

* σκοπουντων 2 Cor. 4. 18.

condemned person would scarce think of any thing but procuring a reprieve, and his earnestness for this would bar the door against other intruders.

Let it be *affectionate* and *practical*. Meditation should excite a spiritual delight in God, as it did in the Psalmist;* this delight would keep up good thoughts, and keep out impertinencies. A bare speculation will tire the soul. and without application, and pressing upon the will and affections, will rather chill, than warm devotion. It is only by this means, that we shall have the efficacy of truth in our wills, and the sweetness in our affections, as well as the notion of it in our understandings. The more operative any truth is in this manner upon us, the less power will other thoughts have to interrupt, and the more disdainfully will the heart look upon them, if they dare be impudent. Never therefore leave thinking of a spiritual subject, till your heart be affected with it. If you think of the evil of sin, leave not till your heart loathe it; if of God, cease not till it mount up in admirations of him. If you think of his mercy, melt for abusing it; if of his sovereignty, awe your heart into obedient resolutions; if of his presence, double your watch over yourself. If you meditate on Christ, make no end till your hearts love him; if of his death, plead the value of it, for the justification of your persons, and apply the virtue of it, for the sanctification of your natures. Without this practical stamp upon our affections, we shall have light spirits, while we have opportunity to converse with the most serious objects. We often hear foolish thoughts breathing out themselves in a house of mourning, in the midst of coffins, and trophies of death, as if men were confident they should never die; whereas none are so ridiculous as to assert they shall live for ever. By this instance in a truth so certainly assented to, we may judge of the necessity of this direction in truths more doubtfully believed.

* My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord, Psa. 104. 4.

7. Draw spiritual inferences from *occasional* objects. David did but earnestly consider the heavens, and he breaks out in self abasement, and humble admirations of God, *Psal.* 8. 3, 4. Glean matter of instruction to yourselves, and praise to your Maker, from every thing you see, it will be a degree of restoration to a state of innocency, since this was Adam's task in paradise. Dwell not upon any created object only as a virtuoso, to gratify your rational curiosity, but as a christian call religion to the feast, and make a spiritual improvement. No creature can meet our eyes, but affords us lessons worthy our thoughts, besides the general notices of the power and wisdom of the Creator. Thus may the sheep read us a lecture of patience, the dove of innocence, the ant and bee raise blushes in us for our sluggishness, and the stupid ox, and dull ass, correct and shame our ungrateful ignorance. And since our Saviour set forth his own excellency in a sensible dress, the consideration of those metaphors by an acute fancy, would garnish our divine truths more deliciously, and conduct us into a more inward knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. He whose eyes are open, cannot want an instructor, unless he wants a heart. Thus may a tradesman spiritualize the matter he works upon, and make his commodities serve in wholesome meditations to his mind, and at once enrich both his soul and his coffers, yea, and in part restore the creatures to the happiness of answering a great end of their creation, which man deprived them of when he subjected them to vanity. Such a view of spiritual truths in sensible pictures would clear our knowledge, purify our fancies, animate our affections, encourage our graces, disgrace our vices, and both argue and shame us into duty: and thus take away all the causes of our wild wandering thoughts at once. And a frequent exercise of this method would beget and support a habit of thinking well, and weaken, if not expel, a habit of thinking ill.

II. Directions for the preventing *bad thoughts.* And to this purpose.

1. Exercise frequent *humiliations.* Pride exposes us to impatient and disquieting thoughts, whereas humility clears up a calm and serenity in the soul. It is Agur's advice to be humbled particularly for evil thoughts, *Prov.* 30. 32. Frequent humiliations will deaden the fire within, and make the sparks the fewer. The deeper the plough sinks, the more the weeds are killed, and the ground fitted for good grain. Men do not easily fall into those sins, for which they have been deeply humbled. Vain conceits love to reside most in jolly hearts; but *by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better, Eccles.* 7. 3, 4. There is more of wisdom, or wise consideration, in a composed and graciously mournful spirit, whereas carnal mirth and sports cause the heart to evaporate into lightness and folly. The more we are humbled for them, the more our hatred of them will be fomented, and consequently the more prepared shall we be to give them a repulse upon any bold intrusion.

2. Avoid entangling yourselves *with the world.* * This clay will clog our minds, and a dirty happiness will engender but dirty thoughts. Who were so foolish to have *inward thoughts that their houses shall continue for ever,* but those that *trusted in their riches?* If the world possess our souls, it will breed carking thoughts; much business meets with crosses, and then it breeds murmuring thoughts, and sometimes it is crowned with success, and then it starts proud and self applauding thoughts. *Those that will be rich, fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts;* such lusts that make men fools; and one part of folly is to have wild and senseless fancies. Mists and fogs are in the lower region near the earth, but reach not that next the heavens. Were we free from earthly affections, these gross vapours could not so easily disturb our minds; but if the world once settle in our hearts, we shall never want the fumes

2 Lutea fælicitas. Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. 10.

of it to fill our heads. And as covetous desires will fill us with foolish imaginations, so they will smother any good thought cast into us; as the *thorns* of worldly cares *choked the good seed*, and made it *unfruitful*, *Matt.* 13. 22. As we are to rejoice in the world as though we rejoiced not, so, by the same reason, we should think of the world as though we thought not. A conformity with the world in affection, is inconsistent with a change of the frame of the mind.

3. Avoid *idleness.* Serious callings do naturally compose men's spirits; but too much recreation makes them blaze out in vanity. Idle souls, as well as idle persons, will be ranging. As idleness in a state is both the mother and nurse of faction; and in the natural body gives birth and increase to many diseases by enfeebling the natural heat, so it both kindles and foments many light and unprofitable imaginations in the soul, which would be sufficiently diverted, if the active mind were kept intent upon some stated work. So truly may that which was said of the servant, be applied to our nobler part, that it will be wicked, if once it degenerates into slothfulness in its proper charge, *Mat.* 25. 26; & 13. 25. As empty minds are the fittest subjects for extravagant fooleries; so vacant times are the fittest seasons. While we sleep, the importunate enemy within, as well as the envious adversary without us, will have a successful opportunity to sow the tares, whereas a constant employment frustrates the attempt, and discourages the devil, because he sees we are not at leisure.

Therefore when any sinful motion steps in, double thy vigour about thy present business, and the foolish impertinent will sneak out of thy heart at this discountenance. So true is that in this case, which Pharaoh falsely imagined in another, that the more we labour, the less we shall *regard vain words.* As Satan is prevented by diligence in our callings, so sometimes the Spirit visits us, and fills us with holy affections

at such seasons; as Christ appeared to Peter and other disciples, when they were fishing; and usually manifested his grace to men, when they were engaged in their useful businesses, or religious services. But these motions (as we may observe by the way) which come from the Spirit, are not to put us out of our way, but to assist us in our walking in it, and further us both in our attendance on, and success in our duties. To this end look upon the work of your callings as the work of God, which ought to be done in obedience to him; as he has set you to be useful in the community. Thus a holy exercise of our callings would sanctify our minds, and by prepossessing them with solid business, we should leave little room for any spider to weave its cob-webs.

4. Awe your hearts with the thoughts of God's *omniscience*, especially the discovery of it at the last judgment. We are very much atheists in the concern of this attribute; for though it be notionally believed, yet for the most part it is practically denied. *God understands all our thoughts afar off:* as he knew every creature which lay hid in the chaos, and undigested matter. God *is in us all*; as much in us all, as he is above us all; yea in every creek, and chink, and point of our hearts. Not an atom in the spirits of all men in the world, but is obvious to that all-seeing eye, which *knows every one of those things that come into our minds, Ezek.* 11. 5. God knows both the order and confusion of them, and can better tell their nature one by one, than Adam named the creatures. Fancy then, that you hear the sound of the last trumpet, that you see God's tribunal set, and his omniscience calling out singly all the secrets of your heart. Would not the consideration of this allay the heat of all other imaginations? If a foolish thought break in, consider, what if God, who knows this, should presently call me to judgment for this sinful glance? Say with the church, *shall not God*

search this out? Is it fit either for God's glory, or our interest, that when he comes to make inquisition in us, he should find such swarms of Egyptian reptiles, creeping up and down our chambers? Were our heads and hearts possessed by this substantial truth, we should be ashamed to think, what we shall be ashamed to own at the last day.

5. Keep a *constant watch over your hearts.* David desires God to set a *watch before the door of his lips;* much more should we desire that God would keep the door of our hearts. We should have grace stand sentinel there especially; for words have an outward bridle, they may disgrace a man, and impair his interest and credit, but thoughts are unknown, if undiscovered by words. If a man knew what time the *thief would come* to rob him, he would *watch.* We know we have thieves within us to steal away our hearts; therefore when they are so near us, we should watch against a surprise, and the more carefully, because they are so extraordinary sudden in their rise, and quick in their motion. Our minds are like idle school-boys, that will be frisking from one place to another, if the master's back be turned, and playing instead of learning. Let a strict hand be kept over our affections, those *wild beasts* * within us; because they many times force the understanding to pass a judgment according to their pleasure, not its own sentiment. Young men should be most intent upon their guard, because their fancies gather vigour from their youthful heat, which fires a world of squibs in a day; (which madmen and those which have hot diseases are subject to, because of the excessive inflamation of their brains); and partly because they are not sprung up to a maturity of knowledge, which would breed and foster better thoughts, and discover the plausible pretences of vain affections.

* Θηρία του ψυχῆς, Plato.

There are particular seasons wherein we must double our guard; as when incentives are present, that may set some inward corruption on a flame. *Timothy's office was to exhort younger as well as elder women: and the apostle wished him to do it with all purity or chastity, that a temptation, lying in ambush for him, might not take his thoughts and affections unguarded. Engage thy diligence more at solitary times, and in the night; wherein freedom from business gives an opportunity to an unsanctified imagination, to conjure up a thousand evil spirits; whence perhaps it is that the psalmist tells us, God had tried him in the night, and found him holy. †The solitary cave tainted Lot with incest, who had preserved himself fresh in the midst of the salt lusts of Sodom. In ill company, wherein we may be occasionally cast, there is need of an exacter observation of our hearts; lest corrupt steams, which rise from them, as vapours from lakes and minerals, being breathed in by us, may tincture our spirits; or as those μάσματα, which (as physicians tell us) exhaling from consumptive persons, do by inspiration steal into our blood, and convey a contagion to us.

And though above all keepings and watchings we are to keep and watch our hearts, because *out of them are the issues of life*, *Prov.* 4. 23; yet we must walk the rounds about our senses, and members of the body, as the wise man there adviseth, ver. 24; the mouth which utters wickedness; the eyes, ver. 25, which are brokers to make bargains for the heart; and, ver. 26, the feet which are agents to run on the errand of sin. And the rather must we watch over our senses, because we are naturally more ready

* 1 Tim. 5. 2. ἐν πάσῃ ἁγνείᾳ.

† Psa. 17. 3. Gen. 19. 30. Cellulum mearum cogitatisnum pertimescebam. Hieron.

to follow the motions of them, as having had a longer acquintance and familiarity with them before we grew up to the use of reason. * Besides, most of our thoughts creep in first at the windows of sense; the eye and the ear robbed Eve of original righteousness; and the eye rifled David both of his justice and chastity. If *the eyes behold strange women, the heart will utter perverse things, Prov.* 23. 33. Perverse thoughts will sparkle from a rolling eye. Revel-rout is usual where there is a negligent government. *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls, Prov.* 25. 28, where any thieves may go in and out at pleasure.

III. Directions for the ordering of evil thoughts, when they do intrude; and,

1. *Examine* them. Look often into your heart to see what it is doing: and what thoughts you find working in it, call it to an account; enquire what business they have, what their errand and design is, whence they come, and whither they tend. † David asked his soul the reason of its troubled thoughts, and so ask thy heart the reason why it entertains such ill company, and by what authority they come there, and leave not chiding, till thou hast put it to the blush. Bring every thought to the test of the word.

Asaph had envious thoughts at the prosperity of the wicked, *Psal.* 73. 2, 3, which had almost tripped him up, and laid him in disgrace. And these had blown up atheistical thoughts that God did not much regard, whether his commands were kept or no; as though God had untied the link between duty and reward, and the breach of his laws were the readiest means to a favourable recompence; *I have cleansed my hands in vain*, ver. 13. But when he weighed things in the balance of the

* Plotinus describes thoughts thus; *τον ἔξω ωρος τ' ἔνδον ὁμοιότης παγκοινανία.* Ennead 1. lib. Cor and oculi sunt proxenetæ peccati.

† Why art thou disquieted, O my soul, Psal. 42. 11.

sanctuary, by the holy rules of God's patience and justice, ver. 17, he sees the brutishness of his former conceits; *So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee*, ver. 22, 25; he makes an improvement of them to excite his desire for God, and delight in him.

Let us compare our thoughts with scripture-rules. *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual*, is the way to understand them; comparing spiritual sins with spiritual commands, is the way to know them; and comparing spiritual vices with spiritual graces, is the way to loathe them. Take not then any thing upon trust from a crazy fancy: nor, without a scrutiny, believe that faculty, whereby dogs dream, and animals perform their natural exploits.

2. *Check* them at the *first appearance*. If they bear upon them a palpable mark of sin, bestow not upon them the honour of an examination. If the leprosy appear in the foreheads, thrust them as the priests did Uzziah out of the temple; or as David answered his wicked solicitors, *Depart from me ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God, Psal.* 119. 115. Though we cannot hinder them from haunting us, yet we may from lodging in us. The very sparkling of an abominable motion in our hearts is as little to be looked upon, as the colour of wine in a glass by a man inclined to drunkenness. Quench them instantly, as you would do a spark of fire in a heap of straw. We must not treat with them: Paul's resolve is a good pattern, not to *confer with flesh and blood.**

We do not debate whether we should shake a viper off our hands. If it be plainly a sinful motion, a treaty with it is a degree of disobedience; for a putting it to the question whether we should suckle it, is to question whether God should be obeyed or no. If

* Hic Annibal virtute, non morâ frangitur, Gal. 1. 16.

it savour not of the things of God, hear not its reasons, and compliment it with no less indignation than our Saviour did his officious disciple upon his carnal advice; *Get thee behind me, Satan, Matt.* 16. 22, 23. Excuse it not, because it is little: small vapours may compact themselves into great clouds, and obstruct our sight of heaven: a little poison may spread its venom through a great quantity of meat.* We know not how large a small motion, like a crocodile's egg, may grow, and how ravenous the breed may prove: it may, if entertained, force our judgment, drag our will, and make all our affections bedlams. Besides, since the fancy is that power in us upon which the devil can immediately imprint his suggestions, and that we know not what army he hath to back any sinful motion, if once the gate be set open; let us crush the brat betimes, and fling the head over the wall to discourage the party. Well then, let us be ashamed to cherish that in our thoughts, which we should be ashamed should break out in our words or actions: therefore as soon as you perceive it base, spit it out with detestation: as you do a thing you unexpectedly find ungrateful to your palate.

3. *Improve them.* Poisons may be made medicinal. Let the thoughts of old sins stir up a commotion of anger and hatred. We feel shiverings in our spirits, and a motion in our blood, at the very thought of a bitter potion we have formerly taken: why may we not do that spiritually, which the very frame and constitution of our bodies does naturally, upon the calling a loathsome thing to mind? The Romans' sins were transient, but the *shame* was renewed every time they reflected on them.† They reacted a detestation instead of the pleasure: so should the revivings of old sins in our memories be

* Ex hinc nota est infirmitas mea: quia multo facilius irruunt abominandæ phantasiæ quam discedunt. Kemp. de Imit. Chr. lib. 3. cap. 20.

† Whereof you are now ashamed, Rom. 6. 21.

entertained with our sighs, rather than our joy. We should also manage the opportunity so as to promote some further degrees of our conversion.* There is not the most hellish motion, but we may strike some sparks from it, to kindle our love to God, renew our repentance, raise our thankfulness, or quicken our obedience.

Is it a blasphemous motion against God? It gives you a just occasion thence to awe your heart into a deeper reverence of his majesty. Is it a lustful thought? Open the flood-gates of your godly sorrow, and groan for your original sin. Is it a remembrance of your former sin? Let it wind up your heart in the praises of him, who delivered you from it. Is it to tempt you from duty? Endeavour to be more zealous in the performance of it. Is it to set you at a distance from God? Resolve to be a light shining the clearer in that darkness, and let it excite you to a closer adherence to him. Are they envious thoughts which steal upon you? Let thankfulness be the product, that you enjoy so much as you do, and more than you deserve. Let Satan's fiery darts inflame your love rather than your lust, and, like a skilful pilot, make use of the violence of the winds, and raging of the sea, to further you in your spiritual voyage. This is to beat the devil and our own hearts with their own weapons; who will have little disposition to fight with those arms, wherewith they see themselves wounded. There is not a remembrance of the worst objects but may be improved to humility and thankfulness; as St. Paul never thought of his old persecuting, but he sank down in humiliation, and mounted up in admirations of the riches of grace.

4. Continue your *resistance*, if they still importune thee; and lay not down thy weapons till they wholly

* I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies, Psal. 119. 59.

shrink from thee. As the wise man speaks of a fool's words, so I may not only of our blacker, but our more ærial fancies. The *beginning* of them is *foolishness*, but if suffered to gather strength, they may end in *mischievous madness*, *Eccles.* 10. 13; therefore if they do continue, or re-assume their arms, we must continue and reassume our shield.* Resistance makes the devil and his imps fly: but forbearance makes them impudent. In a battle when one party faints and retreats, it adds new spirits to the enemy that was almost broken before: so will these motions be the more vigorous, if they perceive we begin to flag. That encouraging command, *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*, *Jam.* 4. 7, implies not only the beginning a fight, but continuance in it, till he doth fly. We must not leave the field, till they cease their importunity; nor increase their courage by our own cowardice.

5. Join *supplication* with your opposition. *Watch and pray* are sometimes linked together, *Mat.* 26. 41. The diligence and multitude of our enemies should urge us to watch, that we be not surprized; and our own weakness and proneness to presumption should make us pray, that we may be powerfully assisted. Be as frequent in soliciting God, as they are in soliciting you: as they knock at your heart for entrance, so do you knock at heaven for assistance. And take this for your comfort, as the devil takes their parts, so Christ will take yours at his Father's throne; he that prayed that the devil might not winnow Peter's faith, will intercede that your own heart may not winnow yours. If the wave come upon you, and you are ready to sink, cry out with Peter, *Master, I perish;* and you shall feel his hand raising you, and the winds and waves rebuked into obedience by him. The very motion of your hearts heavenward

* Above all taking the shield of faith. ἀναλαβόντες, taking up again, Eph. 6. 16.

at such a time, is a refusal of the thought that presseth upon you, and will be so upon your account. When any of these buzzing flies discompose you, or more violent hurricanes shake your minds, cry out with David, *Unite my heart to fear thy name, Psal.* 86. 11, 12; and a powerful word will soon silence these disturbing enemies, and settle your souls in a calm and a praising posture.

IV. Directions concerning good motions; whether they spring naturally from a gracious principle, or are peculiarly breathed in by the Spirit. There are ordinary bubblings of grace in a renewed mind, as there are of sins in an unregenerate heart; for grace is as active a principle as any, because it is a participation of the divine nature. But there are other thoughts darted in beyond the ordinary strain of thinking: which like the beams of the sun, evidence both themselves and their original. And as concerning these motions joined together, take these directions in short.

1. *Welcome and entertain* them. As it is our happiness, as well as our duty, to stifle evil motions; so it is our misery, as well as our sin, to extinguish heavenly. Strange fire should be presently quenched, but that which descends from heaven upon the altar of a holy soul,* must be kept alive by quickening meditation. When a holy thought lights suddenly upon you, which hath no connexion with any antecedent business in your mind (provided it be not unseasonable, nor hinder you from any absolutely necessary duty either of religion or your calling) receive it as a messenger from heaven, and the rather because it is a stranger. You know not but you may entertain an angel, yea, something greater than angel, even the Holy Ghost. Open all the powers of your souls, like so many organ pipes, to receive the breath of this Spirit when he blows upon you. It is a sign of an agreeableness

* Θυσιαςηροατα Θεω, Polycarp Epist. ad Phil. terms holy persons.

between the heart and heaven, when we close with and preserve spiritual motions. We need not stand long to examine them; they are evident by their holiness, sweetness, and spirituality. We may as easily discern them, as we can exotic plants from those that grow naturally in our own soil; or as a palate at the first taste can distinguish between a rich and generous wine, and a rough water. The thoughts instilled by the Spirit of adoption are not violent, tumultuous, full of perturbation, but, like himself, gentle and dove-like solicitings, warm and holy impulses, and (when cherished) leave the soul in a more humble, heavenly, pure, and believing temper than they found it. It is a high aggravation of sin to *resist the Holy Ghost*, *Acts* 7. 51. Yet we may quench his motions by neglect, as well as by opposition, and by that means lose both the profit and pleasure which would have attended the entertainment. Salvation came both to Zaccheus's house and heart, upon embracing the first motion our Saviour was pleased to make him; had he slighted that, it is uncertain whether another should have been bestowed upon him. The more such sprouts are planted and nourished in us, the less room will useless weeds have to root themselves, and disperse their influence. And for thy own good thoughts, feed them and keep them alive, that they may not be like a blaze of straw which takes birth, and expires the same minute. Brood upon them, and kill them not, as some birds do their young ones, by too often flying from their nests. David kept up a staple of sound and good thoughts,* he would scarce else have desired God *to try and know them*, had they been only some few weak flashes at uncertain times.

2. *Improve* them for those ends to which they naturally tend. It is not enough to give them a bare reception, and forbear the smothering of them; but

* Try me and know my thoughts, Psal. 139. 23.

we must consider what affections are proper to be raised by them, either in the search of some truth, or performance of some duty. Those gleams which shoot into us on the sudden, have some lesson sealed up in them, to be opened, and learned by us. When Peter upon the crowing of the cock called to mind his Master's admonitions, *he thought thereon and wept*, *Mark* 14. 72; he did not only receive the spark, but kindled a suitable affection. A choice graft, though kept very carefully by us, yet if not presently set, will wither, and disappoint our expectation of the desired fruit. No man is without some secret whispers to dissuade him from some alluring and busy sin;* as Cain had by an audible voice, *Gen.* 4. 7, which had he observed to the damping the revengeful motion against his brother, he had prevented his brother's death, his own despair, and eternal ruin. Have you any motion to seek God's face, as David had? Let your hearts reply, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, *Psal.* 27. 8. The address will be most acceptable at such a time, when your heart is tuned by one, *that searcheth the deep things of God*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 10, and knows his mind, and what airs are most delightful to him. Let our motion be quick in any duty which the Spirit does suggest, and while he heaves our hearts, and oils our wheels, we shall do more in any religious service, and that more pleasantly and successfully, than at any other time with all our own art and industry; for his injections are like water poured into a pump to raise up more; and as Satan's motions are not without a main body to second them, so neither do the Spirit's go unattended, without a sufficient strength to assist the entertainers of them. Well then, lie not at anchor, when a fresh gale would fill thy sails, but lay hold of the present opportunity. These seasons are often like those influences from certain conjunc-

* God speaks once, yea, twice, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, Job 33. 14, 17.

tions of the planets, which if not (according to the astrologer's opinion) presently applied, pass away, and return not again in many ages, so the Spirit's breathings are often determined, that if they be not entertained with suitable affections, the time will be unregainable, and the same gracious opportunities of a sweet intercourse may be for ever lost; for God will not have his holy Spirit dishonoured *in always striving*, *Gen.* 6. 3, with wilful man. When Judas neglected our Saviour's advertisement, *John* 13. 21, the devil quickly enters and hurries him to the execution of his traitorous project, ver. 27, and he never meets with any motion afterwards, but from his new master, and that eternally fatal both to his body and soul.

3. *Refer* them, if possible, *to assist your morning meditation;* that, like little brooks arising from several springs, they may meet in one channel, and compose a more useful stream. What straggling good thoughts arise, though they may owe their birth to several occasions, and tend divers ways, yet list them in the service of that truth, to which you have committed the government of your mind that day, as constables in a time of necessary business for the king, take up men that are going about their honest and lawful occasions, and force them to join in one employ for the public service. Many accidental glances (as was observed before) will serve both to fix and illustrate your morning proposition. But if it be an extraordinary injection, and cannot be referred to your standing thesis, follow it, and let your thoughts run whither it will lead you; a theme of the Spirit's setting is better than one of our own choosing.

4. *Record* the choicer of them. We may have occasion to look back upon them another time, either as grounds of comfort in some hour of temptation, or directions in some sudden emergency, but constantly as persuasive engagements to our necessary duty. Thus they may lie by us for further use, as money in our purse. Since Mary kept and pondered the short

sayings of our Saviour in her heart, *Luke* 2. 19, 51, committing and fitting them as it were in her common place-book; why should not we also preserve the whispers of that Spirit, who receives from the same mouth and hand, what he both speaks and shows to us?* It is pity the dust and filings of choicer metals, which may one time be melted down into a mass, should be lost in a heap of drossy thoughts. If we do not remember them, but like children are taken with their novelty, more than their substance; and like John Baptist's hearers, rejoice in their light only for a season, *John* 5. 35, it will discourage the Spirit from sending any more; and then our hearts will be empty, and we know who stands ready to clap in his hellish swarms and legions. But howsoever we do, God will record our good thoughts as our excusers, if we improve them; as our accusers, if we reject them; and as he took notice how often he had appeared to Solomon, 1 *Kings* 1. 1, 9, so he will take notice how often he hath appeared to us, and write down every motion, whereby we have been solicited, that they may be witnesses of his endeavours for our good and our own wilfulness.

5. *Back them with ejaculations.* Let our hearts be ready to attend every injection from heaven with a motion to it: since it is ingratitude to receive a present, without returning an acknowledgment to the Benefactor. As God turns his thoughts of us into promises, so let us turn our thoughts of him into prayers; and since his regards of us are darted in beams upon us, let them be reflected back upon him in thankfulness for the gift, and earnestness both for the continuance and increase of such impressions; as David prayed that God would not *take his holy Spirit from him, Psal.* 51. 11, which had inspired him with his penitential resolutions. To what purpose doth the Holy Ghost descend upon us, but to declare to

* *συμβαλλεσα. Συμβαλλων, συνρμὺζων.* Hesych.

us *the things which are freely given us of God?* 1 *Cor.* 2. 12. And is it fit for us to hear such a declaration, without a quick suitable reflection? Since the Comforter is to *bring to our remembrance*, *John* 14. 26, what Christ both spake and did; it must be for the same end, for which they were both spoken and acted by him, which was to bring us to a near converse with God. Therefore when the Spirit renews in our minds a gospel truth, let us turn it into a present plea, and be God's remembrancers of his own promises, as the Spirit is our remembrancer of divine truths. We need not doubt some rich fruit of the application at such a season; since, without question, the impressions the Spirit stamps upon us, are as much according to God's will, *Rom.* 8. 27, as the intercessions he makes for us. Therefore when any holy thought doth advance itself in our souls, the most grateful reception we can bestow upon it, will be to suffer our hearts to be immediately fired by it, and imitate with a glowing devotion the royal prophet, in that form he hath drawn up to our hands; *O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy servant, and prepare my heart unto thee*, 1 *Chron.* 29. 18. This will be an encouragement to God, to send more such guests into our hearts. And by an affectionate entertainment of them, we shall gain both a habit of thinking well, and a stock too.

THE STABILITY OF THE CHURCH.

Psal. 87. 5.

AND OF SION IT SHALL BE SAID, THIS AND THAT MAN WAS BORN IN HER; AND THE HIGHEST HIMSELF SHALL ESTABLISH HER.

PART I.

THE CHURCH A PERPETUAL SOCIETY.

This is not to be understood of any particular church—When God ceases to have a church in one place, he will raise up another elsewhere—The church shall have a numerous progeny—The church is of divine establishment—It stands while empires have sunk—No other society ever subsisted amidst such multitudes of enemies—The violence fatal to other societies has been useful to the church—In her increase—In the increase of her spiritual beauty—In her restoration when forlorn and dead—Instruments seasonably provided for her deliverance.

THE author of this Psalm, and the time when it was penned, are uncertain. Some think it was composed after the return of the Jews from Babylon, upon the erection of the second temple, and designed

to be sung in their constant public assemblies. Others think it was composed by David, when he brought the ark to Sion, as the repository for it, till the building of the temple, wherein it might honourably rest. It seems, whoever was the author, to be ecstatical. The penman breaks out into a holy rapture and admiration of the firmness and stability of the church. It is also prophetical of the christian church, of the glory of it, the largeness of its bounds, and perpetual duration. The Jews ridiculously interpret it of literal Jerusalem in regard of the excellence of its climate, the goodness of the air, being seated in the middle or navel of the earth, and the seat and spring of all the wise men, accounting all fools that were to be found in other parts; it is true others were not wise with a wisdom to salvation; they were not instructed in the high mysteries of religion by God, as those people were.

But was there not learning among the Greeks, and wisdom among the Chaldeans, and a ripeness in mechanic arts among the Tyrians which lived in the same climate with the Jews? It can by no means be understood of the material Jerusalem and Sion; that was ruined by the Babylonians, and though re-edified, yet afterwards subverted by the Romans, and the remainders of it at this day become a stable for Mahomet; and the bringing in those nations mentioned, ver. 4, overthrows any such interpretation, which never were enrolled in the registers of Sion, nor became votaries to the true religion, while the walls of that place were standing in their glory. Sion was the place whence the law was to come, *Mich.* 4. 2: a law of another nature than that which was uttered with thunders from Mount Sinai. Sion was the place where the throne of Christ was to be settled, where he was to be crowned King, *Psa.* 2. 6, and where he was to manage the sceptre and rule in the midst of his enemies, *Psa.* 110. 2, and therefore it is celebrated as the figure of the christian church; of that city which Abraham

expected, whose builder and maker is God, *Heb.* 11. 10. And the christian church is particularly called by this name of mount Sion, *Heb.* 12. 21. And believers are called the sons of Sion, *Joel* 2. 23. The psalmist speaks, 1. Of the great love the Lord bears to Sion, ver. 2. 2. Of the glory of the promises made to her, ver. 3. 3. Of the confluence of new inhabitants to her, ver. 4. 4. Of the duration and establishment of her, ver. 5.

Ver. 1. *His foundation.* The foundation of God, i. e. that which God has founded; that Jerusalem which is of God's building, is seated in the holy mountain; the city was built before Joshua conquered Canaan: But God is said to be the founder of it in regard of that peculiar glory to which it was designed, to be the rest of his ark, the place of his worship, the throne of the types of the Messiah, the seat whence the evangelic law was to be published to all nations, and the Messiah revealed as the Redeemer and ruler of the world.

In the holy mountains. Jerusalem was seated upon high mountains. The palace of the king was built upon Sion, and the temple, the house of the Most High, was built upon Moriah, and encompassed with mountains *round about*, *Psal.* 425. 2, an emblem of the strength and stability of the church. * *Holy mountains;* not that there was any inherent holiness in them more than in the other mountains of the earth; or that they were naturally more beautiful and stately than other mountains; but because they were separated for the worship and service of God, and had been ennobled by the performance of a worship there before the building of the temple. It was upon Moriah that Isaac was designed for a sacrifice, and the most signal act of obedience performed to God by the father of the faithful. It was there also that David appeased the wrath of God, by sacrifice, after

* Daille. Melange, part 2. p. 354.

it had issued out upon the people in a plague, for the numbering of them: and the very name Moriah has something sacred in it, it signifying either God teaching, or God manifested; which name might be given it by God, with respect to the manifestation of Christ who was to come, during the standing of the second temple.

Ver. 2. *The Lord loves the gates of Sion.* By *gates* in scripture is meant the strength, or wisdom, or justice of a place. Gates were the magazines of arms, and the places of judicature. He had manifested his love to her in chusing that city before all the cities of Israel and Judah, wherein to place his name, and have his worship celebrated; and that place in Jerusalem particularly where his law should be given by the Spirit to the apostles upon the day of Pentecost; and to apply it to the gospel church, it signifies the special respect God bears to her, above all the rites, observances, and ceremonies of the Judaic institution. It was in this gospel-church, the true Sion, that he *desired to dwell, and* will *remain for ever*, *Psa.* 68. 17. Which is a prophetic psalm of the gospel-times, and the ascension of Christ.

1. *The stability of the church is here asserted.* *The church is not built upon the sand, which may fall with a storm, nor upon the waters, that may float with the waves; nor spread out as a tent in the desert, that may be taken up, and carried away to another place; but upon a mountain *not to be removed*, † it is built upon a rock, the rock of ages; upon a mountain which is not shattered by waves, or shaken by storms, upon Christ, who has the strength of many mountains in himself.

2. *The necessity of holiness in a church.* What though the church be a mountain for strength and eminence, have the honour and privilege of sacra-

* Geiernus in loc.

† Mount Sion cannot be removed, Psa. 125. 1.

ments, and be the ark of the oracles of God, it is not established unless it be a holy mountain: holiness is the only becoming thing in the house of God; as it is consecrated to the glory of God, so it must be exercised in things pertaining to the glory of God. As the foundation is holy, so ought the superstructure to be. There was no impurity in the framing it; there must be no impurity in the continuance of it.

Ver. 3. He speaks with some kind of astonishment of the glorious things spoken of her, or promised to her, and concludes it with a note of attention, or a mark of eminence, Selah. No place enjoyed an equal happiness with Jerusalem, while it remained faithful to its founder. It maintained its standing in the midst of its enemies: no weapon formed against it was able to prosper; heaven planted it, and the dews of heaven watered it; it had a continual succession of prophets; the best kings that ever were in the world, swayed the sceptre in it: it was blessed with more miraculous deliverances than any part of the universe; the nations that loved it not, yet feared its power, and feared the displeasure of its guardian. It was here the Son of God delivered the messages of heaven by the order of his Father; it was here the Spirit first filled the heads and hearts of the apostles, in order to the conversion of a world from idolatry to the sceptre of God: but more glorious things are spoken of the spiritual Sion than of the material Jerusalem; that had Christ in the flesh, and the gospel-church hath Christ in the spirit; he went from thence to heaven, but he comes from heaven to visit them with his comforts; he has left the walls of Jerusalem in its ruins, but he hath not, he will not leave his spiritual *Sion fatherless and comfortless, John* 14. 18; his Spirit abides for ever with his church. *Glorious things are spoken of it*, when he pronounced it impregnable, and that the gates of hell, the power and policy of all the apostate angels and their instruments, should not prevail against her; when he assured her

he would be present with her, not to the end of an age or two, but till the period of time, the consummation of the world; privileges that material Jerusalem could never boast of; whatsoever countries have been applauded for secular excellences, or been famous for wisdom, none can claim such eulogies as gospel Sion, where God has declared his will, published himself a God of salvation, placed the laws of heaven, and poured out that wisdom which comes from above: these are glorious things, above human expectations, above human desires.

The glorious things mentioned of the gospel-church are in ver. 4, where he speaks of the enlargement of her bounds, the increase of her inhabitants, and the numerous muster-rolls of those that shall list themselves in her service.* The time shall come when those nations that are most alienated from the profession of truth, shall come under her wing, and pay allegiance to her empire; strangers shall be brought into her bosom, not only Philistia and Tyre, nations upon her confines, but Egypt and Ethiopia, nations more remote, nations born and bred at a distance shall be registered as born from her womb, and nursed in her lap; distance of place shall not hinder the relation of her children. And when God shall count the people of foreign nations, he shall set a mark upon every true believer, and reckon him as one born in Sion, a citizen of Jerusalem, though not a Jew in the flesh.

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me; or rather among them that know me, or for them that know me; לידעי I will remember them as persons enlightened by me, and acquainted with me. The psalmist reckons up here nations that were the greatest enemies to the church, Rahab or Egypt her ancient enemy; Philistia her perpetual inva-

* I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me. Behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: this man was born there.

der; Rahab signifies pride or fierceness, the fiercest people shall be subdued to Sion by the power of the gospel: Egypt the wisest and most learned nation, the most idolatrous and superstitious, men that rest in their own parts and strength, shall cast away their idols; Babylon the strongest and most powerful empire, the subjects of which the scripture often describes as luxurious, cruel, proud: Tyre the greatest mart, whose citizens were the greatest merchants; the Ethiopians the posterity of cursed Ham, whose souls are blacker than their bodies: men buried in sin, benighted with ignorance, poisoned with pride, the most fierce and envenomed enemies, shall be brought in by an infinite grace, and make up one body with her, and shall be counted as related to her by a new birth, and be made members of her by regeneration: this is properly to be *born in Sion;* as without regeneration we have not God for our Father, so neither have we Sion, or the church, for our mother: this is the great privilege we should inquire after, without which we are not in God's register: this second birth God only approves of, he enrols no man in the number of the citizens of Sion, nor endows them with the special privileges of it upon the account of their first, wherein they lay buried in the corruption of Adam, and are citizens of hell, not of Jerusalem. Again, this second birth is never without the knowledge of God. Ignorance is a bar to this enrolment; he is no man that is not a rational creature, and he no regenerate man, that has not some knowledge in the great mysteries of God in Christ.

In ver. 5. 1, *the honour* of Sion is described by her *fruitfulness.*

1. In regard of the eminency of her births, she is not wholly barren, she has her births of men, and worthy men; the carnal world has not exceeded the church in men of raised intellectuals; Sion has not been a city of fools. Dionysius the Areopagite hath

been her production as well as Damaris a woman. Kings also have been nursed at her breasts, that they might be nursing fathers to her by their power; but the honour of Sion consists in the inward change it makes on men, dispossessing them of the nature of wolves for that of lambs, rendering them the loyal subjects of God instead of his active enemies. It is the glory of Sion, that this or that man born in her, was changed to such principles and such affections, that all the education and politeness of the most accomplished cities in the world could not furnish them with.

2. In regard of the *multitude* of them; this and that man, of all sorts and conditions, and multitudes of them, so that *more are the children of the desolate than of the married wife.* The tents were prophesied to be enlarged, the curtains of the habitations of Sion to be stretched out, and her cords to be lengthened to receive and entertain that multitude of children that should be brought forth by her, after the sacrifice of the Son of God, *Isa.* 54. 1, 2. For that exhortation follows upon the description of the death and exaltation of Christ, *Isa.* 53.

2. The *happiness* of Sion. *The highest himself shall establish her.* Here we notice,

1. *Her security in glory. Establish her.*

2. The *author* of that security and perpetuity. *The Highest;* and that exclusive of any other. *The Highest himself,** all that are not the most high are excluded from having a share in the establishment of the church. It is a work peculiar to him. It is not the excellent learning, strength of the wise, or mighty men, that are born in her, that preserves her, but God alone; he spirits and acts them; means God uses in bringing in inward grace, means he uses in settling the outward form. But such means that have, in reason, no strength to effect so great a business, means different from those which are used in the establishment of

* Coccei in loc.

other kingdoms, whereby the hand that acts them is more visible and plain than the means that are used.* It is not the wit of man which is folly, nor the strength of man which is weakness, nor the holiness of man which is nothing, can claim the honour of this work: God himself picks stones out of the quarry, smoothes them for the building, fixes them in their places, he himself is the only architect, his wisdom contrives it, his grace erects it, his power preserves it, and accomplishes his own work; it is the Highest, none higher to overpower him, none so high as to check him.

Shall establish her. This cannot be meant of the literal or local Sion (though that indeed was preserved while the legal service was to endure, excepting that interruption by the Babylonish captivity, but now Mahomet's horse tramples upon it, and it retains none of the ancient inhabitants,) but of the true mystical Sion, the gospel state of the church, which shall continue in being as Christ the head of it has settled it, till time shall be no more. Other kingdoms may crumble away, the foundations of them be dissolved. But that God which laid the foundation of Sion and built her walls, will preserve her palaces, so that the gates of hell, the subtlety of heretics, the fury of tyrants, the apostacy of some of her pretended children, all the locusts and spawn of the bottomless pit, shall not be able to root her up.

Shall establish her. † The word signifies the affording all things necessary for defence, increase of victory, preparations of it, the knitting of it.

Doct. *The gospel church is a perpetual society established by the highest power in heaven or earth.*

It shall continue as long as the world, and out-live the dissolution of nature; she shall bring forth her man child, notwithstanding all the vigilance of the dragon, which shall be caught up to God and his throne; and though she be forced to fly into the wilderness,

* Folang. † בונן

yet a place is prepared for her habitation, and food for her support during that state, no less than one thousand two hundred and sixty days, or years, and this by no weaker, no meaner a hand than that of God himself, *Rev.* 12. 3, 4, 5, 6; that hand that catches up Christ the man-child into heaven; that hand that sets him upon the throne of God, provides meat for the woman in the wilderness. The head and the body have the same defender, the same protector, the same hand to secure them.* Or by *man child* is meant, the whole number of the believers, which were more numerous before she went into a wilderness condition; the scripture using often the singular for the plural; and the Holy Ghost expressing himself here according to the property of the woman, which is to bring forth one at the same time. The *figure* of the church notes stability; it is *four square, and the length is as large as the breadth, Rev.* 21. 16. *The length, breadth, and height of it are equal;* the most perfect figure, noting perfection and duration. So it was described in the prophecy, *Ezek.* 48. 16, exactly 4500 measures on each side. All belonging to this city or church, is reckoned by the number *twelve, a square number,* equal on all sides; *twelve gates, twelve foundations, Twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, twelve stones to garnish it, Rev.* 21. 12, 13, 14, &c. A square figure is an emblem of unchangeable constancy. Things so framed remain always in the same posture, cast them which way you will; and among some of the heathens was reckoned as a divine figure,† and the character of virtuous man in regard of his constancy was τετράγων.

The shutting of the gate of the new temple, *Ezek.* 44. 2, after the God of Israel had entered in by it, is interpreted by some of the everlasting dwelling of the Lord in the church of the gospel among his people,

* Ribera in loc.

† The Arcadians made Jovis signum quadrangulum Pausanius de Arcadius.

and never departing from it, as he had done from the first temple.* None shall enter in to deface it, none shall prescribe new laws to it, none shall trample upon it; when God enters into the christian church, he shuts the door after him, his presence never departs from it, his gospel shall never be rooted out of it, the church has a security in its foundation as being *built upon a rock*, *Matt.* 18. 16. It hath an assurance of preservation by the presence of the *God of Israel, of Christ in the midst of her*, *Matt.* 28. 19, 20. The tabernacle of *Sion shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken;* and that *because the glorious Lord shall be a place of broad rivers and streams to it*, *Isa.* 33. 20, 21.

The enemies of the church shall be consumed, that God may have his due praise. Hallelujahs are never sung with the highest note, till the wicked and idolatrous generation be rooted out of the earth. Hallelujahs were never used, as the Jews observe, till the consummation of all things, by the setting the church above the tossing of the waves, and the destruction of its troublers, when *the glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, and God rejoice in his works*, *Psal.* 104. 31, 35. And therefore when the blood of his children is avenged by his justice upon his enemies, and the smoke of Antichrist rises before him, and the kingdom of God is for ever settled, Hallelujah is pronounced and repeated with a loud voice, *Rev.* 19. 2, 3, 6. Such a time will be, and God will establish and secure his church till he hath perfected his own and her glory.

This stability the church has experienced in all ages of the world, and it will always be said in her, *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish it for ever*, *Psal.* 48. 8.

* Lightfoot Temple, cap. 38. p. 252.

In the handling this doctrine, these four things are to be remarked.

1. The explication. 2. The proof, that it is so. 3. The reason. 4. The improvement.

I. Explication.

1. This *stability* must not be understood of *any particular church* in the world. Particular churches have their beginnings, progresses, and periods; many churches as well as many persons have apostatized from the faith; many candlesticks have been broken in pieces, and yet the candle not blown out, but removed and set in another socket; particular churches have been corrupted by superstition and idolatry, rent by heresies, and scattered by persecutions. What remains are there of those seven churches in Asia which were *the walk of Christ*, *Rev.* 2. 1, but deplorable ruins? There is no absolute promise given to any particular church, that it shall be free from defection. The church of Rome so flourishing in the apostle's time, was warned to be humble, lest it became as much apostate as that of the Jews, *Rom.* 11. 21, 22. Nay there are predictions of almost an universal apostacy.* And just before the coming of Christ, it will be difficult to find a grain of faith among the multitude of chaff, *Luke* 18. 8. There is not one place which was in the primitive times dignified with truth, but is now deformed by error. Yea, the universal church has been forced by the fury of the dragon, though not to sink, yet to fly into the wilderness and obscurity, yet hath been preserved through all changes in the midst of those desolations and deserts. It is not indeed so fixed in one place but the cords may be taken up, the stakes removed, and the tents pitched in another ground. It is spread through the world wherever God will set up the light of his gospel. Sion hath stood, though some synagogues of it have been pulled down; it has like the

* All the world wondered after the beast, and worshipped him, Rev. 3. 3, 8.

sun kept its station in the firmament, though not without eclipses and clouds to muffle it.

The church is but one, though it be in divers countries, and named according to the places where it resides, as the church of *Ephesus*, the church of *Sardis*, &c. which all are as the beams of the sun darted from one body, branches growing from one root, streams flowing from one fountain, if you obstruct the light of one beam, or lop off one branch, or dam up the stream, yet the sun, root, fountain remains the same; so though the light of particular churches may be dim and extinguished, and the beauty of them defaced, yet the universal church, that which is properly Sion, remains the same, it remains upon Christ the rock, and is still upon the basis of the covenant, it is still God's church, and God is her God. When a people have forfeited their church privileges by barrenness and wantonness, and God in justice strips them of their ornaments, he will have another people which he will form for his glory, and fit for his residence, the gospel shall never want an host to entertain it, nor a ground to be made fruitful by it.*

The kingdom of God is not destroyed when it is removed, but transplanted into a more fruitful soil. While Christ has a body in the world, he will find a Joseph of Arimathea to embalm it, and preserve it for a resurrection. When the glory of the Lord goes off from one cherub, it will find other cherubim whereon to settle, *Ezek.* 10. 4, 18. That glory which had dwelt in the material ark of the sanctuary, departs from thence to find a throne in that chariot which had been described, *Ezek.* 1. Nay, the departure from one church renders his name more glorious in another.† The rejection of the carnal Israel was the preamble to the appearance of the

* The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Mat. 21. 43.

† Rivett in Hos. 1. 10. p. 518.

spiritual Israel, and the kingdom of the Messiah was rendered more large and illustrious by the the dissolving of that church that had confidence in the flesh, trusted in their external rites, and patched the beauty and purity of divine worship with their whorish additions; just as the mortification of the flesh gives liveliness to the spirit, and the pulling up noisome weeds from a garden makes room for the setting and flourishing growth of good plants.

2. Though God removes the church in one place, yet he *will not only have a church, but a professing church in another. It shall be said of Sion, this and that man was born there.* It shall be said of Sion by God, it shall be said of Sion by men. If Christ confesses none before his Father, but such as *confess him before men, Luke* 12. 8, shall he ever want employment? shall the world ever be at that pass as to bear none that profess him? and so none to be owned by him at the right hand of his Father? Shall he by whom all things subsist, have none to acknowledge their subsistance by him? The world may be the inheritance of Christ, but scarce counted his possession, if there were not in some parts of it a body of subjects to justify their allegiance to him in the face of a persecuting generation. Indeed when the church was confined to the narrow limits of the carnal Israel, the profession of the truth was contracted to a few, though the faith of it might be alive in others; only Caleb and Joshua among the whole body of the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness asserted the honour of God, and maintained the truth of his promise, though the belief of it might sparkle in the hearts of others under the ashes of their fears, that hinted their discovery of it to others. It was another time reduced to one, and Elijah only had the boldness to make a declaration of the name of God, though there were seven thousand who had retained their purity while they had lost their courage to publish it, 1 *Kings* 19. 18. But in the christian church, since the number of elect are more, the pro-

fession will be greater in the midst of an universal apostacy of pretenders; *All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, Rev.* 3. 8, that is, the beast, *whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb.* If their election be a preservative against an adoration of the beast, it is also a security against the denial of any such worship; and an encouragement to profess the name of Christ, when they shall be brought upon the stage.

This profession may lie much in the dark, and not be so visible as before; as a field of corn overtopped by weeds looks, at a distance, as if there were nothing else but the blue and red cockle and darnel, but when we come near we see the good grain shews its head as well as the weeds, but a professing people there will be one where or other. It is a standing law of christianity, that a *belief in the heart* should be attended by *confession with the mouth, Rom.* 10. 9. And the church is a congregation of people sounding the voice of Christ, as he was preached and confessed by the apostles; while there are believers, there will be professors in society together, some ordinances settled in being, during the continuance of the world; as the supper, 1 *Cor.* 11. 6, implies a society, as a seat of the administration; baptism is a ceremony of admission into a society, the supper a feasting of several upon spiritual viands. Officers appointed imply a body professing some rules, *Matt.* 28. 20. To what purpose are all these settled during the continuace of the world, if they were not somewhere to be practised till that period of time, and how can they be practised without a confederation and society? Without such a body all the ordinances and rules of Christ would be in vain, and imply as little wisdom in enacting them, as a want of power in not keeping up a society in some part of the world to observe them according to his own prescriptions. There will therefore be in some part or other of the world a church openly professing the doctrine of truth.

3. This church, or Sion, *shall have a numerous progeny.* The spiritual Israel shall be *as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered, Hos.* 1. 10, which was the promise made to Abraham, *Gen.* 22. 17, and renewed in the same terms to Jacob, *Gen.* 32. 12. The church is a little flock in comparison of the carnal world, yet it is numerous in itself, though not in every place, for sometimes there may not be above three found to withstand the worship of a golden image, yet in some one or other place of the world, and successively it shall be numerous ; he will not lose the honour of the feast he hath prepared, though those that are invited prefer their farms and oxen before it, but will find guests in the high-ways ; he will spread his wings from east to west, and in *every place incense shall be offered to his name, Mal.* 1. 11.

The church is compared to the *morning, Cant.* 6. 10, which from small beginnings in a short time fills the whole hemisphere with light ; and the promises concerning it run all that way. The *hills* were *to be covered with the shadow* of it ; *her boughs are to be sent out to the sea, and her branches to the river, Psal.* 80. 10, 11. It was to spread itself like a *goodly cedar,* and be a *dwelling place to the fowl of every wing, Ezek.* 17. 23. Yea, a numberless multitude from all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, are to stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, *clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, Rev.* 7. 9, adorned with innocence, and crowned with victory. No monarchy ever did, ever can so far stretch her bounds, nor hath the sun seen any place where it has not seen some sprinkling of a church. Every kingdom hath met with unpassable bounds, but the ensigns of Christ have not been limited. The church was once crowded up in a narrow compass of Judea, but since that her territories are enlarged, her ensigns have flourished over many countries ; Rahab, Tyre, Ethiopia, the vast circuit of Asia, and the deserts of Africa, have been

added to her empire, her progeny shall be hereafter as numerous as it hath been: when the devices of antichrist shall be more seen and perceived, they will be more nauseated, and many with Ephraim shall say, *What have I to do any more with idols?*

II. *That God has hitherto established Sion.*

1. It is testified by its *present standing, when other empires have sunk by age or violence.*

God has promised the stability and eminence of the *mountain of the Lord's house* above all the mountains, the strongest power, and most compacted empires of the world, sometimes signified to us by that title, *Isa.* 2. 2. And in the midst of his destroying plague, and his milder anger with the church, she has a charter of security; *Though I make a full end of all nations, yet will I not make an end of thee, Jer.* 30. 11. Further, the reasons why kingdoms and nations are pulled up by the roots, and utterly wasted, is not only because they are inveterate enemies, but refuse her easy chains, and decline her service; *The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted, Isa.* 60. 12. The warrant for the execution of such is as firmly sealed by heaven, as the patent for the church's preservation, it is repeated with an emphasis. The persecuted church has still been lifted up, when the Assyrian, Persian, and Greek monarchies have fallen in pieces, and left no footsteps of their grandeur.

The prosperity of worldly kingdoms is no better than a fire of straw that blazes and vanishes, it has but the brittle foundation of human policy, and an establishment by a temporary providence; the everlasting covenant, and the basis of divine truth and love, cannot be claimed by any but the church; not a kingdom can be pitched upon in all the records of history, that hath maintained its standing, triumphed over its enemies, and subsisted at such a rate, and by unusual and unheard of methods, as the church hath done. These that have been best guarded by laws,

hedged in with the best methods of government, and armed with a strong power to protect them, have found something or other rising from their own bowels, or their enemie's power, to procure their dissolution. But the church, though dashed against so many rocks, has yet floated above the deluge of those commotions that have sunk other societies.

The kings of the world could never yet boast of a full conquest of her, or that she has been subjected to the same condition with themselves; she has borne up her head in the midst of earthly revolutions, and met with her preservation or resurrection, where carnal interests have found their funeral. Those that have set their feet upon the church's breasts, or spilt her blood, have found their poison where they imagined they should find their safety. The Babylonish empire, which was God's rod for the correcting his people, saw herself in the chains of her enemies that night she had been sacrilegiously carousing healths in the *sacred vessels of the temple*, *Dan.* 5. 3, 30. And the Jews enjoyed a deliverer, where the Babylonians felt the force of a conqueror. Many such fatal periods may be reckoned up both in sacred and human history, either for not protecting, or persecuting that which is so dear to the Highest who has established her.

2. No society but the church ever subsisted in the midst of a *multitude of enemies*. Has she not been like a little flock in the midst of many wolves, which though they sucked the blood of some, yet could never reach the head or heart of the whole? The devil has attacked her, without vanquishing her; shaken her, without ruining her. The biting of the serpent, according to the ancient promise, may bruise the heel, but not the head, and make an incurable wound in the mystical body. She has been preserved in a hating world in spite of the enmity of it, by a divine wisdom that has not regulated itself by the methods of flesh and blood. His feeding the Israelites in the

wilderness was a figure of what he would do to his church, and he hath accomplished it to the gospel-church, as really as he did to the ancient Israel. While she has been in a wilderness these twelve hundred years, and I hope somewhat upwards, she has not wanted her manna, nor her rock; she has been fed in her straits, and preserved in her combats; and as Christ reigns, so the church lives, and *hath her table spread in the midst of her enemies.*

What is eleven hundred years' continuance of the Venetian government, to so many thousand years' preservation of the church in the midst of atheism, paganism, antichristianism, ever since it was first born and nursed in Adam's family; and this has been, when her friends have forsaken her; when her enemies have been confident of her ruin; when herself has expected little else than destruction; when she has thought sometimes in her straits, her God ignorant of her; when hell hath poured out a flood, the carnal earth hath sometimes found it their interest to help her, though their enmity were irreconcilable against her, *Rev.* 12. 16. The subtilty and power of her enemies, that have found success in their other projects, have met with an unforeseen baffle, when they have armed against her. Men of the greatest abilities have proved fools, when they have exercised their wit against her. Ahitophel's wisdom was great when on David's side, and changed to folly when he shifted sides against him. A secret blast has been upon the projects of men, when they have turned against her upon secular interests.

In the greatest judgments which have come, and shall come upon the world, when wonders shall be shewn in the heavens, and in the earth, blood, fire, and pillars of smoke; when the *sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Joel* 2. 30, 31; yet God will have a Mount Sion and Jerusalem: some that *call upon his name,* ver. 32. Not the malice of her enemies shall impair her, because of God's

power, nor the common judgments of the world, under which others sink, shall extinguish her, because of God's truth, *as the Lord has said,* ver. 32. Whence comes all this, but from God's having been her *dwelling-place in all generations? Psal.* 90. 1. He was so to her from the time of Abraham, to the introduction of his posterity into Canaan; he hath sheltered her as an house doth an inhabitant, or the ark did Noah in the midst of many waters. In all generations Sion has been impregnable; for he that is her dwelling-place, hath formed the mountains, and *from everlasting to everlasting is only God, ver.* 2. And though one generation passes and another comes, he is the same dwelling-place, and never out of repair, never will want repair; and therefore it is an astonishment, that the devil after so long an experience should be such a fool as to engage in new attempts, when he has found so little success in his former, and has had so many ages to witness the baffles he hath received: what a fool is he to think that her defender should be conquered by a revolted angel, that lies under an everlasting curse!

3. The violences against her, which have been fatal to other societies, have been *useful to her.* This bush has burned without consuming, and preserved its verdure in the midst of fire, not from the nature of the bush, but the presence of him that dwelt in it: It has not only subsisted in the midst of her enemies, but has been established by means of the violence of men, and grown greater in the midst of torments and death; she has not only outgrown her afflictions, but grown greater and better by them. The last monarchy composed of clay and iron, clay for its earthly and miry designs, and iron for its force and violence, is the immediate usher of the kingdom of God, that shall never be destroyed, but stand for ever, *Dan.* 2. 41, 44.

(1.) She hath been often *increased.* Persecution hath cut off some branches of the vine, but more have been found sprouting up instead of them that were

cut off. Her blood has been seed, and the pangs of her martyrs have been fruitful in bringing forth new witnesses. We have scarce read of more sudden conversions to christianity, though indeed more numerous, by the preaching of the word, than by the shedding the blood of christians. Eminent professors have sprung out of the martyrs' ashes. The storms have been so far from destroying her, that it has been the occasion of spreading her tents in a larger ground. Saul's winnowing the church, blew away some of the corn to take root in other places, *Acts* 8. 3, 4. Like seeds of plants blown away by the wind, which have risen and brought forth their kind in another soil; and it is no more than has been predicted; *Such a time of trouble that never was since there was a nation, should be the time when many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased. Dan.* 12. 1, 4. While other societies increased by persecuting their enemies, this increases by being persecuted herself. *It grows as a vine. Hos.* 14. 7. Though it be cut, the cutting has contributed to its thriving. This rose-bush hath not only stood in the wind, which has rooted up other oaks, but the fragrancy of it has been carried by that wind to places at a greater distance.

When Antiochus commanded all the books of the scripture in the hands of any to be burned, they were not only preserved, but presently after appeared out of their hidden places, as they were translated into the Greek tongue, the language then most known in the world, and made public to other nations. Truth has been often rendered by such proceedings more clear and glorious. The persecution of Sion's head, the captain of our salvation, to death, was the occasion of the discovery of the gospel to the whole world; he was the great seed, that being cast into the ground became so fruitful, as to spread his branches in all corners of the earth, *Job.* 12. 24. And that persecution which I suppose remains yet to be acted, and which will be the smartest, shall be succeeded by the

clearest eruption of gospel-light, wherein the gospel shall recover its ancient and primitive glory. The slaying of the witnesses shall end in an evangelical success, *Rev.* 11. 9, 10, &c. The world *shall give glory to the God of heaven*, ver. 13. *The kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Christ*, ver. 15. Christ shall more illustriously reign, ver. 17. *The temple of God shall be opened in heaven*, ver. 19. The spiritual Israel, as well as the national, the antitype as well as the type, have multiplied under oppression;* and, like an arched building, stood firmer by all the weights that have been designed to crush her.

(2.) *She has often been refined* by the most violent persecutions of her enemies.

She has not only survived the flames that have been kindled against her, but as refined gold comes out more beautiful from the furnace, left her dross behind her, and has been wrought into a more beautiful frame by the hand of her great artificer; like the sand upon the sea shore, she has not only broke the force of the waves, but been assisted by them to discharge her filth, and been washed more clean by those waves that rushed in to drown her. She has been more conformed to the image of her head, and made fitter to glorify God here, and to enter into the glory of God hereafter. The church is to *cast forth her roots like Lebanon, Hos.* 14. 5. The cedar by its shaking grows up more in beauty as well as strength, and the torch by its knocks burns the clearer. Though the number of her children might sometimes decrease through fear, yet her true offspring that have remained, have increased in their zeal, courage, and love to God. Apostates themselves have proved refiners of them that they have deserted. The corn is the purer by the separation of the chaff. Thus hath she grown purer by flames, and sounder by batteries.†

* Decay of Christian Piety, p. 23.

† And some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge and make them white, Dan. 11. 35.

4. When she has seemed to be *forlorn and dead, God has restored her.* When Israel was at the lowest, a decree issued out in Egypt to destroy her males and root out her seed, deliverance began to dawn; and when destruction hovered over her at the Red sea, and scarce a valiant believer found among a multitude of despairers, God turned the back of the knife to his Israel, and the edge to the throat of the enemies. When the whole church, as well as the whole world, seemed to be at its last gasp, God preserved a Noah as a spark to kindle a new world, and a new church by. When Jerusalem was sacked, the city destroyed, the people dispersed into several parts of the Babylonish empire, without any human probability of ever being gathered again into one body; yet she was preserved, restored, re-collected, brought out of the sepulchre, re-settled in her ancient soil, and recovered her beauty, which can be said of no other society in the world but this; whose deliverance and restoration hung not upon the will and policy of man, but upon the word of God, who had limited their captivity to seventy years, and promised a restoration.

The blessing of God to Abraham and Sarah is set out as a ground of faith and comfort for the church's restoration and increase. *He will comfort Sion, and comfort all her waste places, and make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of God, that joy and gladness may be found therein, Isa.* 51. 1, 2, 3; as well as he did enliven the dead body of Abraham and the barren womb of Sarah. When the church has been so low, that men have despaired of seeing any more of her than her ashes, God has produced a new remnant, he has reserved a tenth to return, *Isa.* 6. 13, and from the hidden womb of the earth brought forth a new succession by the vigorous influence of the sun of righteousness. And after the last attempt and success of the antichristian state, when they are jolly and merry at the church's funeral,

Rev. 11. 10; they shall soon be amazed at her resurrection, ver. 11, as much as the high priests were at the resurrection of Christ. For the church can no more lay in the grave than her head, the mystical body no more than the natural; his resurrection was an earnest of this, and this the accomplishment of that; little difference in the time of their grave state; three days the natural body lay, three days and an half only the mystical shall lay before a full revival.

5. God never wanted *instruments* for his church, in due season. If Abel be butchered by Cain, God will raise up Seth in his place, to bring men to a public form of worship, *Gen.* 4. 26. If Nebuchadnezzar be the axe to hew down Jerusalem, Cyrus shall be the instrument to build her up; when his time is come he will not want an Ezra and Nehemiah to rear her walls, nor be wanting to them to inspire them with courage, and assist their labour in spite of the adversaries that would give check-mate to the work. If Stephen be stoned by the Jews, he will call out Paul an abetter of that murder to be a preacher of the gospel, and he that was all fire against it, shall become as great a flame for the propagation of it; one Phœnix shall arise out of the ashes of another. When Arianism, like a deluge, overflowed the world, the church wanted not an Athanasius to stand in the gap, and be a champion for the truth of the deity of Christ. When enemies rose up against the church from all quarters to afflict it, God raised others from all quarters to defend it, *Zech.* 1. 19, 20. Yea, those that have been the instruments to support the anti-christian state against her, by giving their power and strength to the beast, shall turn their arms against that which they supported, to *make her desolate, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire*, *Rev.* 17. 12, 13, 16. It is the same Christ that is king in his church, and the Spirit is not dispossessed of his office, to furnish men with gifts for the defence and increase of it; he is still a *Spirit of government* in magistrates, and *the Spirit of*

fire in ministers for the church's interest. Now since the church has maintained its standing longer than any other empire, and that in the midst of its enemies, and has been both increased and refined by the violences used against her, since she has been so often restored, and never wanted instruments for the rearing and protecting her, who can doubt whether the Highest has not, and whether the Highest will not, still establish her, and cover her with his mighty wings?

PART II.

REASONS FOR THE CHURCH'S STABILITY, &c.

The honour of God—His design in creating the world—He is the builder of Zion—The author of her preservation and prosperity—His cost and pains on her behalf—His faithfulness—To Christ the head of the church—To the church itself—The seat of his glory—The object of his affection—The natural weakness of the church—The offices of Christ exercised in the church—A Prophet, to establish her doctrine—A Priest, to establish her in favour with God—A King to govern her—The foundation of the church is sure—Ordinances of the church perpetual—Security of its members—The folly of its enemies—Encouragement to prayer—Ground of trust the great comfort of the church's stability—In confusions of the world—In persecutions—In prospect of her future glory—Caution against apostacy from the church—The love of Zion—Desiring and labouring for her prosperity.

THE THIRD point to which we must attend is the *reason* of the church's stability.

And, *First, it is necessary for the honour of God.* Those societies may moulder away, and those religions grow feeble, which have drawn their birth from the wisdom of man, and been settled by the force of man; but a divine work must needs have a divine establishment. It is so,

1. If you regard it as his main design in the *creation of the world.* Can we think God made the world for the world's sake, that he pitched tabernacles here for a few creatures, that could spell from all his works but a few and little letters of his name? Could the bare creation shew to man so much as his back parts? The most glorious perfections of his nature could never be visible in a handful of creatures, though never so glorious, no nor in multitudes of worlds of a more beautiful aspect, without the discovery of the gospel, and the settling of a gospel church. How should we have known his patience, been instructed in his mercy, have had any sense of his grace, or understood the depths of his wisdom, or heard the voice of the yearning of his love, so as they are linked together in his nature? If God created the world for his glory, he created it for his highest glory; a bare creation without a redeemed company of creatures, could never have given us a prospect of the great glory of his nature, nor have answered the end of God, which was the manifestation of his perfections.

His wisdom appeared in the frame of all creatures, giving them life and motion; but his eye, when he made the world, was upon the manifestation of a greater wisdom which then lay hid in his bosom, and was not to be discovered but in the publishing the gospel, *Eph.* 3. 9, 10. The wisdom that broke out in the creation, was but a scaffold, whereon in time his wisdom in the glory of a church peculiar to himself should appear. All things were created for Christ as well as by him, for him and his glory, as Mediator and as head of the church, and therefore for the glory of his body. And his end in sending Christ, was to *gather all things together in him; those things which are in heaven, as well as those which are on earth*, *Eph.* 1. 10. And in order to that end, he *works all things according to the counsel of his own will*, ver. 11. This counsel and will of appointing

Christ, was the spring and rule of all his works, and therefore of creation, as well as the rest succeeding it. He that would upon occasion give the richest parts of the world for the ransom of *Sion, as Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba, Isa.* 23. 43, may well be thought to create those and other nations to lay a foundation for her. We know that soon after the creation, the rest of God was disturbed by the entrance of sin, which could not come unexpected, unforeseen, and unpermitted. There had not then been any ground of rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, *Prov.* 8. 31, if he had not designed something else. But he provided in his counsel another rest, and in order to that suffered this first rest in the bare creation to be spoiled; Sion he chose; and Sion he desired as his *rest for ever wherein he would dwell, Psal.* 132. 13, 14.

The end of God in creation was not certainly only to make a sun or stars, an earth bedecked with plants, and man a rational creature, only to contemplate these works, but to render him the acknowledgments of his power and wisdom :* as a limner lays his chief design in the midst of the cloth, and fills the void places with many other fancies to beautify and set off his work, but those were not in his first intention, but his main design was the draught, in the middle, surrounded with the rest. Now when man by sin had made himself incapable of performing the work he had to do, God orders things so as to have a rest, to have a people to acknowledge him. Hence perhaps the forming of such a people is called by the term of a new creation, not only as it is an act of creative power, but as it was the chief design of the exerting his power in the creation of the world. And shall the chief of his counsel be the conquest and triumph of Satan? Shall he at the closing up of the world be defeated of his main contrivance? Surely if there were a greater opposition to Sion than ever there

* Charron, 3 Verit. lib. 3. cap. 1. p. 16.

was, he would exert a greater strength than ever he did, not to be crossed in his principal aim.

2. As he hath been the *author and builder of Sion.** Great kings have a particular care of the cities they have founded for the honour and preservation of their name, and a testimony of their magnificence; with what choice privileges do they use to endow them? With what strong garrisons do they use to secure them in time of danger? And shall not the great God perpetuate that which he has formed for his glory, to which he hath given a peculiar denomination of the *city of God?* Nebuchadnezzar cannot be more industrious to enrich Babylon, which he built by the might of his power, than God will be to perpetuate Sion, which he has built for the honour of his majesty. God was the architect of this city; and gave the model. Christ was the builder of this city, and raised the structure.† God laid the platform of all things, much more of that which is dearer to him than all things: he laid the foundation of it by his Son; whereas the Jewish synagogue was formed by the ministry of Moses; he has poured upon her greater treasures of knowledge, a fuller measure of the Spirit than he did before, that the knowledge of precedent ages was nothing in comparison of that which he lighted in the gospel Sion, in the fulness of time. The Spirit has formed the church in the womb of the world, as he formed Christ in the womb of the virgin. The natural and the mystical body of the Son of God have the same author and original; not a stone fitted to be a part in composing this temple, but was culled out, and polished by God, 1 *Pet.* 3. 5. He that laid the corner stone, fixes the *lively stones* to become a spiritual house. Are built; not built themselves; it is his house, because he built it, as well as his house

* Called by that title four times in Psal. 48. 1, 2, 8, 14, whence the Psalmist concludes the establishment of her.

† He, i. e. Christ, built the house, and he that built all things is God. Heb. 3. 3, 4.

because he dwells in it, and rules it as the master of the family.

Though the whole fabric of nature is God's work, yet the church is peculiarly, and by way of distinction called *his work*; and every stone in it is called *his jewel*, made so by his power, in working a real change; for by nature they were as unfit as the common pebbles of the earth. He is therefore peculiarly called the Creator of Israel, *Isa.* 43. 15. As he has maintained a creation revolted from him, notwithstanding all the provoking sins of men; so he will maintain a creation dear to him, notwithstanding all the bloody contrivances of men. Sion's inheritance is secured, because it is *a branch of God's planting*, *Isa.* 60. 21. Things are preserved by the same means whereby they are first settled. Is it not then the honour of God to be the establisher of that by the power of his might, whereof he hath been the founder by the strength of his arm.

He made not use of the riches, power, and wisdom of the world, to lay the foundation of Sion; but as the Jews, he wrought as it were with a trowel in one hand, and a sword in the other, and erected her walls against the force and policy of hell and earth; and as he founded it without worldly advantages, and against the stream of corrupt nature, he knows how to preserve it when the wit and strength of the world are contrary to it. It would be too low a conceit of the wisdom and power of God, to imagine that he should undertake so great a work, to be baffled in the end he designed to himself, his wisdom is as much concerned in honour to work wonders for the preservation of Sion, as his power was employed at first miraculously, to lay the first corner stone of her.

3. As he hath been *the preserver and enlarger* of her to this day. Men think themselves concerned in honour to perfect those which they call their creatures, and often regard one act of kindness as an engagement upon them to successive acts of the like nature. It

is not for the honour of any man to stand by a friend a long time, and to enjoy the glory of assisting him, and desert him at the last pinch. God set up the church after the fall in Adam's family, rather than create a new world to create a new church; he raised up Seth to propagate it, when Abel was taken off by the bloody hands of his brother; he preserved it in Noah's family, in the midst of a corrupted and degenerate world, and settled it upon the foundation of the gospel in both, upon the first promise in the family of Adam, *Gen.* 3. 15. Upon the *sweet-smelling sacrifice* offered by Noah, *Gen.* 8. 20, 21, 22. Not upon the symbol or type, the blood of the beasts, but upon the thing signified by it, and the preservation of the world promised after that sacrifice, was chiefly in order to the preservation of a church in it, as the creation of the world was in order to the erecting it; and therefore the rainbow settled then a sign of the covenant, for the world's preservation from a flood of waters, is made the sign of the everlasting covenant of peace, both in Ezekiel, and in the Revelations, as a sign he would preserve his church from the multitude of waters, from the rage of the people, signified by waters in the prophetic part of scripture, and from the floods that the devil should cast out against her, *Ezek.* 1. 28; *Rev.* 4. 3. And thence it is that this covenant of her establishment is compared with that covenant God swore to Noah, and the faith of the church strengthened by reflection upon that, *Isa.* 54. 9. After this settling it in Noah, he fixed it in Abraham, and cleared up the promise of the Messiah, with a greater evidence than to the ages before, he multiplied it in the fleshly Israel, and enlarged the bounds of it to a whole nation. After that, he takes away the partition wall, and spreads her confines to the possession of the Gentiles, that the sons of Japhet might dwell in the tent of Shem, according to his promise, *Gen.* 9. 27; out of the forlorn Gentiles, as stupid as stocks and stones, he

raiseth up children, a great posterity to Abraham. Those that he employed in the erecting Sion, and establishing the law that went out from her in the rubbish of the Gentiles, he struck off from all human assistances, all strength and power in themselves, when he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait there for a power from on high, before they ventured to be witnesses to him, and publish his name, not only in the uttermost parts of the earth, but in Jerusalem, the city where they were to abide, or in any part of Judea, *Acts* 1. 4, 8. They were not to speak a word of him in their own strength, or in any strength less than a power from heaven, which was to be given them by the sending the Spirit, and this he calls *the promise of the Father*, as signifying his purpose to enlarge his church, as well as build it at the first, by himself and his own power. It is this, the promise of the Father, our Saviour there pitches their faith upon, and it is this our faith should be established in, in all conditions of the church.

Now hath God thus reared up a church out of the ashes of man's original apostacy, settled it among the murmuring and ungrateful Israelites that industriously longed for the garlic and onions of Egypt, as weary of the greatness of his mercy to them, and propagated it to the idolatrous Gentiles filled with all unrighteousness, as bad as bad could be, as is described, *Rom.* 1. 29, 30, 31? To what purpose was the enlarging the church's patent, if he did intend the footsteps of her should ever be rooted out of the world? He picked out the weakest, poorest persons as the matter of it, that he might shew his own honour in preserving it: he has yet supported her all the while she hath carried the cross of her Lord: he has sent his Spirit to frame a succession of new materials for her: how fruitless would all this be, if he should let hell waste the temple erected for heaven? What? did he gather and enlarge the church only to make it a richer conquest, and a fatter morsel for the devil? How vain would

his former kindness appear, if he should let it utterly sink as long as the world endures? It cannot be imagined with any semblance of reason, that God hath taken all this care about the nursing and growth of the church from small beginnings, to let his darling be a prey to the mouth of lions, and be of no other use than to fatten his enemies.

4. In regard of the *cost and pains he* hath been at about Sion. Did the creation of the world ever cost him so much? Was there one tear, one groan, one sigh, much less the blood of the Son of God, expended in laying the foundation of it? When the matter of it was without form and void, the beauty of it was not wrought with a washing with blood. When God established the clouds above, and strengthened the foundations of the deep, when he gave the sea his decree, and appointed the foundations of the earth, the Son of God *was by him rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and his delights were with the sons of men*, *Prov.* 8. 28, 29, 31. Not bleeding and dying. But this he must do, he must take human nature, be bruised in his heel by the serpent, and be a sacrifice himself, make an atonement for sin, before a stone for the building of spiritual Sion could be framed and laid.

What pains have been taken also in the effecting it? The birth of the church was a work of greater power than the fabric of the world; a few words went to the rearing of that; in the revolution of six days it was set upon its feet: but many a year was God in travail before Sion was brought forth; there was an enemy as potent as hell to deal with in setting it in Adam's family after man's apostacy: the corrupt nature, that had then got the possession of the world, to contest with. The world must be drowned to bring it to a second nativity and establishment in Noah. The forming the church of the Jews was not without some pangs of nature; what signs, and wonders, and great terrors were wrought in its bringing forth out

of Egypt, and striking off the chains of her captivity? What *fire, blackness, darkness, tempest, Deut.* 4. 34, that made a convulsion in the souls of those that were to be her materials? *Heb.* 12. 18, 19. And the bringing forth the Gentile church, and enlarging the cords and stakes of Sion, was preceded by the darkening the sun, the trembling of the earth, the opening of the graves, the suffering of that which was dearest to God himself.

No power was ever employed so signally in the affairs of any worldly concern, as in the settlement of Sion. The devouring waves of the Red sea have been made her bulwarks, and the sand, the grave of her enemies, has been a path for her passage. The sun has forgotten his natural race, to gaze upon her victories, *Josh.* 10. 13; angels have been commissioned to be her champions, and fight her battles, 2 *Kings* 19. 35. The whole host of heaven have been arrayed to fight for Sion on earth. The merciless nature of the fire hath been curbed, to preserve her children, when she seemed to be reduced to a small number; and the mouths of starved lions have been bridled for the same purpose, *Dan.* 6. 22. The proudest enemies to her have been vanquished by frogs and lice; and tyrants, that would lay their hands upon her, have been made to their disgrace a living banquet for worms the vilest creatures, *Acts* 12. 23.

And indeed, after the malice of the devil had usurped God's right in the creation, and had drawn the chief of his sublunary creatures into an apostacy with himself, no less than an infinite power could be engaged against the greatest of created powers, if God would not forego his own honour in suffering himself to be deprived of the fruit of his works. No less than infinite power could erect a church in the world; that God might have the fruit of his creation, he ordered this power to appear, struck down the gates of hell, sent his Son to rescue his honour, and his Spirit to

polish stones for his temple. Every one that is fitted for this building, had almightiness at work with him *before he was formed, Eph.* 1. 19, 20. Every stone was hewed by the Spirit, and the image of God was imprinted by a divine efficacy. Shall the fruit of so much power, and the mark of his own image, want an establishment. God would seem to be careless of the treasures of his own nature, wherewith he has endowed her. Shall all this cost and pains be to no purpose? Were *the gates of hell* taken down to be set up again more strongly? and the chargeable counsels of God to be puffed away by the breath of Satan? Does it consist with his wisdom, to let Sion fall out of his hands into the power of her old oppressor? Men are more desirous to preserve the estate they have gotten by sweat, than that which is left them by inheritance; and are most careful in settling that which has cost them more treasure and more labour. Jacob sets a value upon the portion he got with his *sword* and *bow*, *Gen.* 48. 22. No less will God upon that Sion he has wrested out of the world by the might of his arm.

5. In regard of *faithfulness:* his veracity is engaged.

(1.) In regard of faithfulness *to Christ the head.* The Spirit was promised to Christ; *Having received the promise of the Holy Ghost, Acts* 2. 33, i. e. the Holy Ghost promised to him by the Father: he received that which was promised; his receiving it from God implied the Spirit's being promised to him by God. To what end was this Spirit given him, and sent by him? *To convince the world of righteousness, John* 16. 10; an effect necessary to the building Sion. For this end he received it, for this end therefore it was promised to him. The promise would be vain, the performance of the promise, in the mission of the Holy Ghost, would be to no purpose, if the end for which he was promised, and for which he was sent, were not performed, if there should not be a perpetual number convinced of, and embracing that righteous-

ness of Christ, which hath been manifested by his going to the Father.

God also promised him a great posterity after his making his soul *an offering for sin, Isa*, 53. 10, 11. A seed that he should see, therefore stable and perpetual, * because always visible to him. God pledged his word upon the condition of his death; the condition was performed to the full satisfaction of God: his truth therefore has no evasion, no plea to deny the performance of the promise in raising up a multitude of believers in the world, and such a multitude as shall always be seen with pleasure by him, as good and sound children, and the travail of the mother's womb, are by the parents. The truth of God is obliged by Christ's exact performance of the condition, as well as by the particular respect he has to the glory of it; it was for the church Christ *gave himself, Eph.* 5. 25. It is necessary therefore that God should preserve and establish a church for him to the end of the world; that Christ might not by any default of his Father, lose the end and design of his death, there shall be a generation of believers, a little seed lying in the midst of all the chaff: so God promised; his name shall be propagated in a perpetual birth of children, it shall be found while the sun in the heaven keeps his station†.

2. In regard of faithfulness *to the church itself.* How does the word sparkle with promises to Sion in all her concerns? He hath promised an indissoluble marriage, the fixing a knot that shall never be untied‡. A marriage that shall never end in widowhood, so that judgment, righteousness, loving kindness, mercy, faithfulness must first fail, before the church meet

* A posterity was to follow his sacrifice, his cross was to give them being, and his blood was to give them life.

† His name shall be continued as long as the world, Psal. 72. 17. יִנּוֹן.

‡ I will betroth thee unto me for ever, and that in judgment, righteousness, loving-kindness, mercy, faithfulness, Hos. 2. 19.

with *an entire dissolution*, i. e. God and the glorious perfections of his nature shall fail, before the church be forsaken, and left to her enemies. She is no less assured of continual supplies and nourishment, and that by no meaner a hand than that of *God himself; I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, I will keep it night and day*, *Isa.* 27. 3; without failing her a minute; he would water her with doctrine to preserve her verdure and increase her growth. He would be her guardian night and day, in the darkness of adversity, in the sunshine of prosperity; so that Satan should not outwit, nor the craft and subtlety of heretics waste her; for it refers to ver. 1, wherein God promised her to punish *the piercing serpent*, *the crooked serpent*, that by various windings and turnings, insinuates himself to the destruction of men. And he adds, *fury is not in me*, ver. 4, he lays by his anger against her, as considered in apostate nature: the fury of hell shall not prevail where the anger of God is pacified, but her enemies shall be as briars and thorns before him. He has a consuming fury for her enemies, though he has none for his vineyard.

Protection is in no less measure promised, and that not a temporary one, not a bare defence, but with the ruin of her enemies, and treading them down, as straw is trodden down for the dunghill; *In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest*, *Isa.* 25. 10. By hand is meant his power, and by rest is meant the perpetual motion of it for her, and that against the most furious, malicious, and powerful of her enemies, *against the gates of hell*, *Matt.* 16. 18; against the wisdom of hell, gates being the seat of counsel; against the censures and sentences of hell, gates being the place of judicature; against the arms of hell, gates being the place of strength and guards. When Christ secures against hell, he secures against all that receive their commission from hell; neither hell itself, nor the instruments edged and envenomed by hell, shall prevail against her; she

is secured for her assemblies in one part or other, when they gather together to hear the law, and to sacrifice; *And I that am the Lord thy God, from the land of Egypt, will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of solemn feasts, Hos.* 12. 9. It is a promise to the church, it was never yet, nor appears like to be, performed to the ten tribes as a nation, but to their posterity as swallowed up in, and embodied with the Gentiles.

The conquest of her enemies is secured to her, *Psa.* 110. 1. The promise is made to Christ of making *his enemies his footstool;* but made to him, as *David's Lord*, and consequently as the Lord of his people, as *King in Sion;* and therefore made to the whole body of his loyal subjects. And all those things are of little comfort without duration and stability, which is also secured to her; *His going forth, Hos.* 6. 3, i. e. the going forth of God in the church, is *prepared as the morning.* נכן stable; his appearance for her, and in her, is as certain as the dawning of the morning light at the appointed hour. All the clouds which threaten a perpetual night, cannot hinder it, all the workers of darkness cannot prevent it; the morning will dawn whether they will or no. Her duration is compared to the most durable things, to that of the cedar, the most lasting of all plants. Three times it is compared to *Lebanon*, in the promise, *Hos.* 14. 5, 6, 7. The *cedar* never rots, worms eat it not. It is not only free from putrefaction itself, but the juice of it preserves other things. Numa's books *, though of paper, yet dipped in the juice of cedar, remained without corruption in the ground five hundred years. How shall that God who always remembers every thing, yea the meanest of his creatures, forget his own variety of expressions and multiplied promises concerning his Sion?

6. In regard, it is the *seat of his glory. It is the branch of his planting, the work of his hands, that he*

* Sanct. in loc.

might be glorified, *Isa.* 60. 21. His glory would have a brush, if Sion should sink to ruin. *He sows her for himself*, *Hos.* 2. 23, speaking of the church in the time of the gospel, not to the devil, to sin, to the world, but to his own glory. As husbandmen sow their fields for their own use, to reap from them a fruitful crop; and therefore till the harvest be in, they take care to make up the breaches, and preserve them from the incursions of beasts. Though God has an objective glory from all creatures, yet he hath an active glory only from the church. It is Israel, the *house of Aaron*, and *those that fear the Lord*, that the psalmist calls upon to render God the praise of the *eternity of his mercy*, *Psa.* 118. 2, 3, 4. He forbids the profane and disobedient world *to take his covenant in their mouth*, *Psa.* 50. 16. None do, none can truly honour and acknowledge him, but the church; therefore the apostle in his doxology appropriates the glory that is to be given to God as the object, to the church as the subject; *Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end*, *Eph.* 3. 21. So solemn a wish from so great an apostle, that it *should* be, amounts to a certainty that it will be.

There cannot be a glory to God in the church throughout all ages, without the continuance of the church in all ages. God will have a revenue of glory paid him during the continuance of the world; there shall therefore be a standing church during the duration of the world; while he therefore expects a *glory* from the *midst* of his people, he will be a *wall of fire round about them*, and keep Sion, one where or other, in a posture to glorify him. What is the apostle's motive to this glory? It is not a remote power, such as can act, but will not; but a power operative in the church, in doing those things for her, which she could never *ask or think* for herself.* God has a greater

* Now to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

glory from the church, than he can have from the world; he therefore gives her more signal experiments of his power, wisdom, and love, than to the rest of the world. He had a glory from angels, but only as Creator, not as Redeemer, till they were acquainted with his design, and were speculators of his actions in gathering a church in the world.

The church therefore was the *original* of the new glory and praise the angels presented to God. *Glory in the church by Christ.* Musculus thinks that is added to distinguish it from the Jewish church, which was settled by the ministry of Moses; as much as to say, God had not so much glory by the tabernacles of Jacob, as he hath by the church as settled by Christ. Or, by Christ, notes the manner of the presenting our praise, and the ground of the acceptance of our praise. God accepts no glory but what is offered to him by the hand of Christ; and Christ presents no glory but what is paid him by the church. It is the church then, and the gospel-church, that preserves the glory of God in the world. If the church therefore ceaseth, the glory of God in the world ceases. But since God has created all for his own glory, separated a church out of the world for his glory, appointed his Son the head of it, that he might be glorified, his church therefore is as dear to him as his glory, and dear to him in order to his glory; in establishing it therefore he establishes his own honour and name. It shall therefore remain in this world to glorify him, afterwards in another to glorify him, and be glorified by him.

7. In regard that it is the object of his *peculiar affection.* Establishment of a beloved object is inseparable from a real affection. By this he secures the spiritual Sion, or gospel church, both from being forsaken by him, or made desolate by her enemies, because she was Hephzibah, *Isa.* 62. 4, *my delight*, or, *my will is in her*, as if he had no will to any thing

but what concerned her and her safety: as men engrave upon their rings the image of those friends that are dearest to them, and as the Jews in their captivity engraved the effigies of their city upon their rings, to keep her in perpetual remembrance, so doth God engrave *Sion upon the palms of his hands*, *Isa.* 49. 16, to which the Holy Ghost seems to allude. He so loves his Israel, that he who will be commanded by none, stoops to be commanded by them in things concerning his sons, *Isa.* 45. 10. Not only ask of me what you want, but command me in the things that are to come; the pleas of my promises of things to come, and your desires to bring them forth as the work of my hand, shall be as powerful a motive to me, as a command from a superior is to an obedient inferior; for it is to things to come, such things that God hath predicted, that he limits their asking, which he calls also here commanding of him.

There was a real love in the first choice; there is an intenseness of love in the first attraction; *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee*, *Jer.* 31. 3. His love, which had a being from eternity, is expressed by words of more tenderness, when he comes to frame her; *loving-kindness;* as if his affection seemed to be increased, when he came to the execution of his counsel. According to the vigour of his immutable love will be the strength of her immutable establishment. This promise is made, not to the church in general, but to all the families of the spiritual Israel, ver. 1. Men are concerned in honour for that upon which they have placed their affection. Shall there then be decays in the kindness of that God, whose glory it is to be immutable? Is it possible this fountain should be frozen in his breast? Was there not a love of good will to Sion to frame her, to select out her materials, when they lay like swine in the confused

mass and mire of a corrupt world? Is there not also a love of delight, since he has refined and beautified her by imparting to her of his *own comeliness? Ezek.* 16. 14. Is it likely this affection should sink into carelessness? And the fruit of so much love be dashed in pieces? Can such tenderness be so unconcerned, as to let the apple of his eye be plucked out? To be a lazy spectator of the pillage of his jewels by the powers of hell? To have the centre of his delight tossed about at the pleasure of men and devils? Shall a mother be careless of her sucking child? How then can that God, whose tenderness to the church cannot be equalled by the affection of the most compassionate mother to her infants? Surely God is concerned in honour, to maintain against a feeble devil, and a decrepit world, that which is the object of his almighty affection.

8. In regard of the *natural weakness of the church.* No generous prince but will think himself bound in honour to support the weaker subject; no tender parent but will acknowledge himself obliged in affection to take a greater care of the weaker than the stronger child; the gardener adds props to the feeblest plants, that are most exposed to the fury of the storms, and have least strength to withstand them. The powers of the world have always been the church's enemies; the wise have set their reason, and the mighty their arms against her; the devil, the god of this world, is so far from being her friend, that Sion has been the only object of his spite. He contrives only floods to drown her, or mines to demolish her. Her own friends are often so darkened, or divided, that they cannot sometimes for ignorance, and will not other times for peevishness hit upon, and use the right means for her preservation. It is an honourable thing then for that God, who entitles himself *the Father of the fatherless,* to shew his own power and grace in her establishment. The fatherless condition of the church is an argument she has

sometimes used to procure the assistance she wanted.* And the weakness of Jacob, urged by the prophet, excited repentance in God, and averted two judgments which were threatened against that people, *Amos* 7. 2, 3, 5, 6. It is no mean motive to him to help the helpless, this opportunity he delights to take; when there was no man to help, *no intercessor to plead, then his own arm brought salvation.* When he saw no defenders, but all ravagers; no physicians, but all wounders, *then should the Spirit of the Lord lift up a standard, Isa.* 59. 16, 19.

To conclude, if Sion, the gospel church, were not of as long a duration as the standing of the world, God would lose the honour of his creation, after the devil by sin had made the creatures unuseful for those ends to which God had appointed them by his first institution. The wisdom of God had been aspersed, the serpent would have triumphed, the kingdom of God had been dissolved, the enemy would have enjoyed a remediless tyranny, had not God put his hand to the work, and erected a new kingdom to himself out of the ruins of the fall. And since God was pleased to take this course rather than create a new world, and has laid the foundation of a new kingdom by drawing some out of that common rebellion the human nature was fallen into, and that he might do it with honour to himself, has sent his Son upon that errand, by his blood to bring back man to God, and his Spirit to make men fit for a communion with him, and has backed his affection to the church with so much cost and pains for her welfare; if after all this God should desert his church, the dishonour of God's wisdom, the loss of the fruit of all his cost and pains, the weakness of his affection, or of his power to perform his promise, and the ruin of his glory intended by those methods, would be the issue, which would be attended with the triumph of

* With thee the fatherless find mercy, Hos. 14. 3.

his revolted creature, and greatest enemy. This would be, if God should cease picking out some men for his praise, and keeping up his name and royalty in the earth.

Secondly. It is *for the exercise of the offices of Christ* that Sion should be established. He is *Prophet*, *Priest*, and *King*, which are all titles of relation. *Prophet* implies some to be instructed, a *Priest*, some to offer for, and a *King* some to be ruled; put one relation, and you must necessarily put the other. If there were no church preserved in the world, he would be a nominal Prophet without any disciples, a King without subjects, and a Priest without suppliants to be atoned by him, upon earth. Now Christ is the *wonderful Counsellor*, *the everlasting Father*, and *the government is laid upon his shoulders;* to what end? To order and establish the kingdom of God, *Isa.* 9. 6, 7. All the strength and vigour he had, as it was from God, so it was intended for God. * And the reason is, because, though God has given up the administration of things to Christ, yet he has not divested himself of his right, nor can; for God is the chief Lord, and the relation of creatures not ceasing, the relation of Lord and Creator cannot cease. And therefore since the right of God continues, the grant of the uttermost ends of the earth to be the inheritance and possession of Christ, includes not only a gift, but an office, to preserve, protect, establish, and improve his possession for those ends for which he had the grant, and to prevent all that may impair it. As he had a right and strength, by the order of God, to rear it, so he hath an office and power to establish it, as well as to erect it, and *Christ is the same* in all his offices *yesterday, to day, and for ever*, *Heb.* 13. 8. The same in credit with God, in faithfulness to his office, the virtue of his blood, the force of his arm, and compassions to bleeding Sion.

* Thou madest the Son of man strong for thyself, Psal. 80. 17.

1. It is his part, as a *prophet*, to establish it in doctrine. It is his part externally to raise his truth when it lies gasping in the rubbish of error, and refine his worship when it is daubed with superstition and idolatry. Internally to clear the understanding to know his truth, quicken the will to embrace it, rivet the word in the conscience, and inflame the affections to love and delight in it. Certainly the promise of the abiding of his Spirit implies the efficacy of his operation while he abides. He is to provide against the subtlety and rapine of fox-like heretics, that they spoil not the *tender vine*, *Cant.* 2. 15. And to furnish the church with gifts for the preserving and increasing her. The perpetual exercise of this prophetical office he promised them, when he gave the apostles a charter for his presence to the end of the world, *Matt.* 28. 20. Which was in relation to their ministry and their office of teaching. Since he promised his presence with his ministry to the end of the world, he will have a church to the end of the world, to enjoy the benefit of that promise to be taught by them. It consisted not with the wisdom or faithfulness of Christ to promise a perpetuity to that, if he knew it were to be cut short before the end of the world.

And this himself also assures the church of in all its variety of states; *These things saith he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, *Rev.* 2. 1. Not only seven stars at one time, or seven golden candlesticks in being together, but in all the successions of the church to the consummation of the world. And as he describes himself by this title when he speaks of the church of Ephesus, which was the first state of the church, not only assuring her of his holding her star, and walking by her candlestick, but all the rest that were to follow, so he renews the same expression in part when he speaks of the church of Sardis, which is the rising of the church from the

apostacy wherein it had been covered in the Thyatirian state; *These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, Rev.* 3. 1. The seven spirits of God signify the gifts for the building and perfecting the church still in the hand of Christ, which should be in a more plentiful way poured out than for some time before, as they were in the first reformation. He is still therefore as a prophet walking in the church in all ages. Not only in the first foundation of it by the apostles, but in the reformation of it, after it had been buried in superstition and idolatry. And at the restoration of the church in the world, there shall be a pure river of water as *clear as chrystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb, Rev.* 22. 1, i. e. pure doctrine without any mixtures.

2. It is his part as a *priest* to establish it in the favour of God, and look to the reparations of his temple. The church is his temple. A temple is the proper seat and the proper care of a priest. He is a priest still *upon his throne*, and that *for ever*. As he hath therefore something to offer, so he hath always some for whom he offers, who are they but his church? His prayer on earth, *John* 17, was but a model or draught of his intercession in heaven, one part of it is for preservation of them *through the truth* of God. The keeping up the gospel in the world in order to a sanctification of some, is the matter of his intercession, which is one part of his priestly office. And we cannot imagine his plea for his church to be a weaker on his throne, it being also a throne of grace, than it was for his enemies when he was upon a cross of suffering.

The *compassions* annexed to his priesthood remain still, *Heb.* 4. 15. If his office be perpetual, the qualifications necessary to that office are as durable as the office itself, as long as there is any object for their exercise. To what purpose are his compassions,

if he should not pity her for whom they were designed, and for whose behalf he was furnished with them? He cannot be faithful to God in his office, if he be not merciful and tender to Sion in her distresses. He certainly pities her as he would himself, were it possible he should be in an infirm condition. He must lose his soul before he can lose his pity, and the church must cease to be his body, before she can cease to be the object of his compassions. He hath the same sentiments now that he had when he called to Paul from heaven, *Acts* 9. 4. It was not then, why persecutest thou mine, but why persecutest thou me? Nor is it so now, as the relation continues the same, so does the compassion, so do his sentiments so do his cares. To what purpose does he as a priest sit upon a throne of grace, if he did not shew grace to his Sion against the cruel designs of her enemies? As God pities us when he *remembers our frame*, *Psal.* 103. 13, 14; so no question does Christ when he remembers Sion's oppressions, as a distressed child is the object of the father's pity.

Add to this, that since the death of Christ was one part of his priestly performance, and that the virtue of his sacrifice is as eternal as his priesthood, what a disparagement would it be to him, and the virtue of his death, if ever the world while it stood, should be void of the fruits of it? There can be no moment wherein it is not valid to expiate the sins of some men, and therefore not a moment wherein the world shall be without a Sion, whose sins are expiated by it. Should the standard of Sion be snatched away, and torn by the powers of darkness, what would become of the glory, what would become of the virtue of the Redeemer's death? Would God consecrate him so solemnly by an oath to be a priest, to so little purpose? How could it be for ever, if the execution of that office should be interrupted by the cessation of a church as long as the world stands upon its pillars? Would it not be an empty title, if the end of it were

not performed? We cannot imagine the falling of Sion, but we must question the merit of his death, the truth of his exaltation, the strength of his intercession, the faithfulness of his office, and the sincerity and candour of his compassions.

3. It is his part, as *a King*, to establish Sion in being, and govern her. The prophet always testified that of his *government there shall be no end.* If the church should cease for one moment in the world, what subjects would he have to govern here? Can he be a king without a kingdom, or a governor without subjects, to bear a voluntary and sincere witness to his name? If he be King in Sion, he will also have a Sion to own him, and a Sion to rule in; not only a conquest of the serpentine brood and infernal powers was promised, but the total and perpetual victory; *The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head, Gen.* 3. 15. When the *head is bruised*, there is to be no more wisdom to guide, or force to spirit the arm and the other members of the body, it was a promise made not only of Christ to man, but of a complete victory to Christ, that he should outwit the serpent's wisdom and utterly discomfit the serpent's power. If the conquest were not perfect and perpetual, it could not be called a *spoiling of principalities and powers*, as it is, *Col.* 2. 15, but an interruption or temporary check, whence they might rescue themselves. He is therefore said to *still the enemy and the avenger*,* i. e. make them utterly silent, not knowing what firm counsels to take or what successful orders to give. And it being his end to destroy the work of the devil, the destroying the works must be the root of the being and preservation of the church.

Did Christ then rise as a conqueror out of the grave,* and sit down as king upon his throne, to let

* I make no scruple to understand the whole Psalm of Christ, since the apostle hath interpreted part of it of him, Heb. 2.

the devil and the world carry away the fruits of his victory? Will he be so injurious to himself, as to let his throne be overturned by his enemies? And to let the adversary of Sion re-possess himself of that which he hath been so powerfully and successfully stripped of? Christ being king cannot be chased out of his kingdom, nor want power to keep it from being utterly wasted. To be the governor of Sion was as much in his first commission as to be her Redeemer.* Christ as king will never leave beating up the quarters of hell, till he hath utterly routed their force, and made the partizans of it his footstool, and thereby established Sion beyond the fears of any tottering.

Therefore when he speaks of the church of Smyrna, which was to have a sore conflict with the devil, and feel the smart of him for ten days, understanding those ten ancient persecutions of the church, he assumes a new title for her encouragement; *These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive, Rev.* 2. 8. I was the first that listed you and embodied you for the war, and I will be the last to bring up the rear; I was first in raising you, and I will be the last in preserving you. Fear not the terror of those persecutions though they be to blood and death; I was used so, I was dead, but I am now alive, and I live for my church, to behold her battles, to procure her victory, and to crown those that shall fall in the fight against her enemies.

Christ in encouraging them to suffer for him, assures them of the security of a church; the devil should not waste the whole, but cast some of them into prison, not all, and that for their refining: *The devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tried*, ver. 10. Christ lives still, and acts as king for the security of Sion, and preserving a generation to

* He was to feed and guide his flock, which is often in Scripture put for ruling, Isa. 49. 10.

serve him, till the time comes that is promised, that *there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and* then *his servants shall serve him* with a full security from all trouble, *Rev.* 22. 3.

Thirdly. The foundation of Sion is *sure.* It is founded upon Christ the *corner stone.* Christ is called the *foundation*, 1 *Cor.* 3. 11. The apostles are the *foundation*, *Eph.* 2. 20. Christ is the foundation personally, the apostles doctrinally; Christ meritoriously, the apostles ministerially; the apostles in regard of the publication of the doctrine; Christ in regard of the efficacy of the doctrine, whereby the church is established.

1. The church is *engrafted* in Christ, united to him, one with him; the parts of it are reckoned as his *seed.** As if they had sprung out of his loins, as men naturally did from Adam's; that as Adam was the foundation of their corruption, so shall Christ be the foundation of their restoration: they shall be looked upon as the children of Christ, and Christ as their Father, and as father and children legally counted one.

The church is his own body, *Eph.* 5. 29, 30. In loving and establishing the church, he loves and establishes himself. Whatsoever is implanted in nature as a perfection, is eminently in God. Now, since he has united with our natures, a care of our own bodies, this care must be much more in the nature of Christ, because his church is as nearly united to him, as our members to the flesh and the bones; and he hath an higher affection to his mystical, than we can have to our natural bodies. Christ will no less secure and perfect his own body, than a man would improve the beauty and strength of his natural body, to preserve it from wounds, from being mangled or scarified, unless it be for the security of the whole. If he did

* A seed shall serve him, it shall be counted to the Lord as a generation, Psal. 22. 30.

not do it, it would be a hatred of his own flesh, which never any man in his right wits was ever guilty of.

The eternity of Christ is made the foundation of the church's establishment. *Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee, Psal.* 102. 27, 28. There could be no strength in the argument without union and communion with him: the church is settled upon him as a foundation, and therefore is of as long a duration as the foundation upon which it stands; the conjunction is so strait, that if one fails, the other must; especially since as Christ is *the head,* the church is his *fulness, Eph.* 1. 22, 23. Sion cannot be complete but in him, and Christ cannot be complete without her. A foundation is of little use without a superstructure, a building falls not without a discredit to the foundation upon which it stood. Sion's completeness depends upon the strength of Christ, and Christ's mystical completeness depends upon the stability of Sion; he will not leave himself an imperfect and empty head.

2. It is founded upon the *covenant.* Upon that which endures for ever, and shall survive the funeral of the whole world. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the church is founded upon that which shall not pass away; *the word of God,* &c. 1 *Pet.* 1. 23. Not such a word as that whereby he brought forth light in the world, and formed the stars at the creation; a word that engaged him not to the perpetuating of it.* This covenant is more firm than the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth. The stars of heaven shall dissolve, the sun shall be turned into darkness, the elements shall change their order for confusion: but the church being founded upon an eternal and immutable covenant, shall subsist in the midst of the confusions and flames of the

* Turretin's Sermons, p. 330.

world. *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my covenant of peace shall not be removed, Isa.* 54. 10. It is more established than the world. The apostle clearly intimates it in his commendation Abraham's faith, when he tells us, *He looked for a city which hath foundations, Heb.* 11. 9, 10, by virtue of the promise of a numerous seed, as if the world had no foundation in comparison of the church. It is beyond the skill of hell, to raze up the foundation, and therefore impossible for it to beat down the superstructure. Adam fell under the strength of the serpent's wit, but he could by no promise lay claim to stability, as the church can by an immutable covenant for her support.

IV. The use, 1. Information.

1. If the church hath a duration and stability, then ordinances and ministry are *perpetual.* Ministers may be thrust into corners, shut up in prison, hurried to their graves; but the sepulchres of ministers are not the graves of the ministry. A ministry and a church, ordinances and a church, cannot be separated; for they run parallel together to the end of the world; Sion cannot be supposed without divine officers and divine institutions; the one cannot be established without the other. Christ walks *in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, Rev.* 2. 1, in the seven states of the church, to the end of the world.* As there are seven states of the church, so there are seven stars in the hand of Christ for all those states; the ministry have the same support, the same guardian as the church herself. What was in the Ephesian and primitive state, is also in the Sardian state, the state of the church arising from corruption of doctrine and ordinances.† Christ hath still stars to shine, and

* I do not question but that the whole is prophetical, it would not else be called mystery, as it is, Rev. 1. 20, where it is meant of those particular churches.

† These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, Rev. 3. 1.

seven Spirits to sift them; hath at present, not had; hath in the state we are, which seems to be the end of that Sardian state.

It is true, the church is in a wilderness condition, and hath been so for above twelve hundred years: but hath she yet seen her funeral? No, she hath a place for her residence, and food for her nourishment, and both provided for her by that God that framed her, by that God that stood by her in the pangs of her travail, and sheltered her *man child* from the fury of her enemies.* *They should feed her;* she is not starved in the desert, she hath manna to comfort her, her caterer to provide her food, and one to administer the banquet of the word and sacraments to her. For any member of Sion to deny a ministry, and deny ordinances, and therefore to neglect them, is to conclude her dead in a grave, and not living in a desert, utterly famished and not fed. Though there be a smoke in the temple, a cloud and obscurity, the truths and ordinances of God not so clear, so efficacious as they have been, as some understand, *Rev.* 15. 8, or as they shall be; yet there is a temple still. A smoke in the temple supposes a temple standing, and ordinances in it: the obscurity of a thing nulls not the being of it, nor a cloud upon the sun, the stability and motion of it.

He that denies a church, a ministry, and divine ordinances in it, must first charge Christ with falsehood, when he promised to be *with them to the end of the world, Mat.* 28. 19, 20. Not to sustain their particular persons to the end of the world, but their doctrine in a succession of some, to teach and baptize by virtue of authority from him: for to that does the promise and command refer, and not to the continuance of the apostolical dignity, or of their extraordinary gifts of miracles, but the duration of their

* And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there twelve hundred and sixty days.

standing work till the top-stone were laid, with the loud acclamations of grace, grace. The church shall no more want a ministry in the desert, than she wanted a prophet in Babylon.

2. The doctrine of the *establishment* of every member of Sion is clearly confirmed. He that establishes Sion, counts up every man that was born in her; every child of Sion is in the same state, and under the same promise as Sion herself. The promise of stability to Sion, is not to be understood of the firmness of her palaces, but the duration of her inhabitants; as when God is said to build a house, it is not to be understood of the rearing the walls, but increasing the family. Every renewed man, every one truly born in Sion stands upon the same foundation of the covenant, hath the same charter with Sion herself, and therefore upon a surer ground than any particular society of men in the world; *They that trust in the Lord, shall be as mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever, Psal.* 125. 1. He is upon a better foundation of security than the church of Ephesus or Smyrna, Pergamus or Sardis, which have lost their footing, and their places know them no more. A believer enjoys other privileges with Sion, but the patent runs here for his stability in the favour of God, and runs high by removing all fears in the negative, *cannot be removed*, and confirming all confidence in the affirmative, *abides for ever*. No name written upon God's hand, no name presented on Christ's breast, shall be razed out, no fruit of his death shall be lost, no devil shall steal from him any part of his purchase. As he has blood enough to redeem them, so he has power enough to preserve them; the same blood that is the cement of Sion, the same hand that built her, the same head that influences her, secures every one of her true born children. They are all in the same posture and upon the same foundation with Sion herself.

3. How great is the *folly of Sion's enemies!* They

judge of her by the weakness of her worldly interest, and not by the almightiness of her guardian. They stand against a God that in decreeing the stability of Sion decreed the ruin of her opposers, and can with as much ease effect it as resolve it. The stone, which is the foundation of this kingdom, shall *break in pieces the image* of all worldly glory, the policy of all worldly wisdom, and the force of all worldly power, *Dan.* 2. 35, 44, 45. It shall make the mountains of the world as a level, and dust underneath it. Chaff may as well stop the wind, and force it to another quarter; stubble may as well quench the fury of the flames, as the enemies of Sion be victorious over the God of Sion. As he has a fire in Sion to warm her; so he has a furnace in Jerusalem to consume her enemies, *Isa.* 31. 9, a fire to burn his people's dross, but a furnace to dissolve his enemies' force.

Pharaoh is an example to all generations, to warn men not to struggle with those whom God resolves to patronize; how did he further his own destruction by his hardness, and the deliverance of the oppressed by his fury? How often is the violence of her enemies the occasion of the manifestation of God's glory, and the settling Sion's security? Had not Pharaoh been so furious, God had not manifested the glory of his power, nor his Israel enjoyed so miraculous a safety. It is true, the church is weak, but the arm that holds her, is the strongest in heaven and earth. Her outward interest is small, but her interest is twisted with that of her Lord. An enemy shall find more mischief from mud-walls, under the protection of a valiant arm, than from stone-walls, under the guard of an infant. How foolish is it for a man to think to break a rock with his fist for hurting his shins, whereby he bruises his hands, as well as his legs? How foolish is it for men to beat the bushes about a lion's den, whereby they will be sure to rouse him? God dwells in Sion, from thence he roars, to the *shaking of heaven and earth,* the powers of the world, when he will

manifest himself to be *the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel, Joel* 3. 16.

4. What a ground is here for *prayer!* This sets an edge upon prayer. No petition can more comfortably, no petition can more confidently be put up, than for Sion's establishment. Prayers for particular persons or for ourselves, may want success, but supplications for Sion never miscarry, they have the same foundation for an answer, that Sion has for her stability, the promise of God; they are agreeable to that affection which shall never be removed from her: how believingly may we cry out, *Be it unto Sion according to thy word?* There is no fear of a repulse; whatsoever God denies, he will not deny that for which he has so often engaged himself. It may be for the good of the church, that so great a person as Paul should lie in chains, and his fetters conduce to the *furtherance of the gospel, Phil.* 1. 12. But it can never be for the interest of Sion, or for the interest of Sion's God, that she should be crushed between the teeth of the lions, and that which he has redeemed by the blood of his Son, be a prey to the laws of Satan. God has entitled Sion *a city not forsaken, Isa.* 62. 12. And as we have his promise for her settlement, so we have his command for our earnestness; *And give him no rest, till he doth establish* Jerusalem *a praise in the whole earth*, ver. 7. And he prescribes us to second that by our prayers, which he had promised, for Jerusalem's *sake I will not rest till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness*, ver. 1. Our desires in this case are suited to his resolves, and run in the same line with his immutable decree; he will have no rest in himself, nor he would have no rest from us, till this be accomplished. We cannot call upon God with a greater confidence for any thing, than for that church that shall outlive the funeral of the world, and survive the frame of nature that shall lie in ashes.

5. What a strong ground is here for *trust!* Look not so much upon the condition of Sion's walls, as

upon her foundation; not upon her present posture, as upon her promise-charter; not upon her as a weak vine, but under the hand of the Highest, as the vine-dresser; look not upon the feebleness of the flock, but upon the care of the Shepherd; not upon the fierceness of the lions, but upon the strength and affection of her Guardian.

(1.) Let not our faith rest upon *appearances.* Flesh will then make a wrong judgment of God. Providences are various, and should our faith be guided only by them, it would have a liveliness one moment, and faint the next. As the promise is the stability of the church, so it is only the stability of our faith. The authority of the word is the life of our faith, and not the sense of any particular providence in the world. A faith built upon protecting providence is a sensitive faith, a faith built upon the promise, is a spiritual faith.

(2.) Yet the experiences God has given us hitherto of the continuance of the church, may be called in to *bear witness to the truth of the promise.* He has before conducted his Israel into Canaan, when Pharaoh meditated their utter ruin, or their continuance under his chains; he fed them with manna, and watered them with a rock in a desert, that afforded no earthly assistance. The preserving the vine could never be ascribed to the vine itself, in which there is no strength; nor the foxes, in whom there is no pity; but to the keeper of the vineyard. We have reason therefore to trust God, but not at all to trust man; is it from man or from God that the church has subsisted so long in the world, a little flock in the midst of many wolves, among enemies more numerous than her friends? What a small number has the church had in any age to mate the multitude of her enemies, what wisdom to countermine their policy, and what power to repel their force?

The church is not weaker now, than it has been; the sons of Sion were always sheep; sheep have not

the strength of lions to resist, nor the swiftness of eagles to fly away from danger; the danger cannot be greater than it has been, there were always dragons that spit out their venom, and lions that opened their mouths against her; the devil never wanted diligence, nor the world enmity to overturn her; could she for one moment have subsisted in the midst of so many furies, had not God been her shield and glory? Call to mind how often God has healed her diseases, and bound up her wounds. Let us rest in that promise, which has so often been made good by his power, which he has in many ages displayed upon as great occasions of danger as Sion can be in. Let us live believingly under his wings, and fear not our own weakness or our enemies' strength.

(3.) We have greater ground of confidence *than the church of Israel had.* In the day of Israel's trouble by Salmanasar, the prophet comforts the church in her anguish, by the consideration of the Messiah who was to assume the government, though many years after, *Isa.* 8. 22, and 9. 1, 6. Shall a promise, that was to stay so many ages for performance, be a ground of trust and confidence to a tottering church then? And shall not the staggering church have more ground to rest, since the Messiah is made the head of the corner, and has the keys of hell and death delivered to him? What a base thing is distrust then against so many assurances of stability, and the experience of a multitude of ages? Grasp the promise, plead it earnestly, shew God his written word which he has sent from heaven, he never yet disowned it, nor ever will. Methinks the voice, *God is able to deliver Sion*, sounds too much of distrust. If we know no more than God's power, we know not so much as the devil doth; he knows his power, and he knows his promise. Let us therefore first eye the promise, which God loves, and the devil fears, and then call in his power to back his word.

(4.) Regard not *man*. Too much eye upon him implies too little upon God, as if God's word were not enough to create and support a confidence without the buttresses of secular strength. All dependence on man is either upon a *broken reed*, that cannot support itself, or a piercing reed, that wounds instead of healing, *Isa.* 36. 6. It is a dishonour to God, and provokes him to lengthen a misery and retard a deliverance. The nearer Sion comes to a final settlement, the more God will act by himself, either without instruments, or in a more signally spiriting instruments, that himself shall be more visible in them than themselves. *The Highest himself shall establish her.* If he be the Highest, he is fit to be trusted by us; if he will do it himself, it is fit we should couple none with him. The nearer the time comes wherein God will appear himself, the more we should depend upon him himself; the exercise of faith should be strongest, when the promise, the object of faith, is nearest its meridian. Let us be more careful to keep our faith from sinking, and to let God alone keep his church from sinking.

Use II. Of *comfort*. The church's patent is singular, the greatest worldly society could never shew the fellow of it. *The Highest himself shall establish her.* There is not such a clause in the settlement of any nation. Why should we be afraid then of the joint conspiracy of men or devils? He that has laid the foundation, can, and will preserve the superstructure, not only because he formed it, but because he has promised it. When Christ would reveal to John the future condition, and the conflicts of the church to the end of the world, he appears like a conqueror with all the ensigns of authority and power about him, *Rev.* 1. 13, 14, 15, 16. He has *eyes like a flame* to pierce his enemies, *feet like brass* to crush them, *a two edged sword out of his mouth*, to pierce them; and this, while he is in the midst of the seven candle-

sticks; the several alterations and periods of the church to the end of the world, to preserve and cleanse them.

1. Here is comfort in the *confusions and troubles of the world.* The shaking of heaven and earth were the harbingers of the appearance of Christ for redemption, and laying the *corner stone of Sion*, *Hag.* 2. 7. The same methods will be used when he shall come to lay the top stone, and complete all the fruits of redemption, *Luke* 21. 25, 26, 28. The confusion of the world is the restoration of Sion; a storm or rushing mighty wind preceded the plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon the apostles, for the blowing the gospel into every corner, *Acts* 2. 2. Never were the disciples in so hopeless a condition as before the resurrection of Christ, the ground of the church's stability; they then expected to see his face no more. What commotions and thunders are described in the Revelation before the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and God pitches his tabernacle among men? But he suffers not those commotions to be raised in the world by the ministering angel, till the servants of God be sealed in the forehead, for their preservation in those confusions which shall be the ruin of their enemies, *Rev.* 7. 2, 3. The ark may shake with the motion of the oxen, but it cannot fall. Noah's ark may be tossed by the waves that drown the world, but not sink, and at last *rest upon the mountains of Ararat.* * i. e. the cure of terrors, the removal of fears. Christ came not to the disciples, but in the fourth watch of the night, and that when the ship was tossed by the waves, and was tugging against a *contrary wind*, *Matt.* 14. 24, 25. It is no hardship for Sion to be in a boat beaten by the sea, when Christ walks upon the waters, and bids her be of good cheer, saying, *It is I, be not afraid.* An

* Gen. 8. 4, of דמשארך

earthquake preceded the deliverance of Paul and Silas out of prison, *Acts* 16. 26. And lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, earthquakes, and great hail, shall accompany the opening of the temple of God in heaven, and the manifestation of the ark of the testament in that temple, *Rev.* 11. 19.

2. Here is comfort in *persecutions.* Persecution is yet for a while the lot of the church; a sea and a wilderness are yet the passage to Canaan. The first promise to Abraham of a numerous seed, was with the comparing it to the *dust of the earth, Gen.* 3. 16. Dust that is trampled upon, dust that is removed by a puff of wind. But the next was by comparing it to the *stars in heaven, Gen.* 15. 5, that are bright, and fixed, and have their orderly motions. Before the introduction of the Philadelphian state of the church, or brotherly state, (which it is likely we are not far from) the promise of glory to them that overcome, intimates a combat, and the promise of Christ's confessing the names of such before his Father, implies a time before the period of the Sardian state, wherein the church is to bear a signal testimony to the truths of Christ in the way of a conflict, *Rev.* 3. 5. The glorious state of the church at the resurrection of the witnesses, shall be preceded by such a calamity as shall be the terror of the godly, and the triumph of an enemy devoted to a sudden and unexpected destruction, *Rev.* 11. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Persecutions make way for Sion's stability. Never was she firmer and purer than in the time of the apostles, and those immediately following them, when the witnesses for the truth, to the loss of their blood, were as numerous as the survivors: she was then, when the flood was cast out against her, clothed with the *sun, and crowned with a crown of twelve stars, Rev.* 12. 1, 2. Such troubles now may dim the outward splendour, but increase her inward spirit, and refine her to that temper she was in in the primitive ages

of christianity. Prosperity was never much the friend of the church: poison was flung in her dish when she gained an earthly felicity, and the fondness of great ones. Her stability consists not in this, but in the graces and spirit of christianity: that which established her head, establishes the body: her captain ascended not from mount Olivet, till he had suffered on mount Calvary. The church was never described so glorious in her outward attire, as her greatest enemy, that is clothed in scarlet, and decked with gold, *Rev.* 17. 4. Sion's glory is internal; *The king's daughter is all glorious within, Psal.* 45. 13.

All those persecutions that are yet to come upon her, shall not demolish her walls: the rigours of her enemies, and the treason of her pretended friends, have not yet expelled her out of the earth; she has not yet sunk, though her masts have been sometimes, cut close to the deck, and her visible pilots flung over-board into the sea; and shall she sink when she is not far from an entrance into the harbour? She has been *a brand plucked out of the fire, Zech.* 3. 2. She was plucked out of the furnace of Babylon, and shall be plucked out of the furnace of mystical Babylon. Though she should be mown down as grass by the scythe of her enemies, yet the presence of Christ shall be as rain upon her, to make her sprout and spread after all her afflictions, *Psal.* 72. 6. Though she has been in the midst of the fire, she never yet was, nor ever will be consumed: she hath had joy in her disgraces, and greatness by her flames: she hath always had a God to inspire her with vigour, to sustain her weakness, and to prop her by his arm, and hath often swam to a safe harbour in a tide of her own blood. Is not that God still a sufficient defence, and the promise a sufficient charter against the violence of the world? *The Highest himself shall establish her*; himself by his own arm, and himself by his own methods.

(3.) Here is comfort in the *deepest designs* of her enemies. *The Highest himself shall establish her.*

If he be the Highest, and employs himself as the Highest, there is none so high as to over-top him, none so high as to outwit him. Though their union be never so close, and their prospects never so deep, yet God's being with the church, is curb enough for them, and comfort enough for Sion; *Associate yourselves together, O ye people,* &c. *Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us, Isa.* 8. 9. God's presence with Sion blows away all. God was with the ark in its captivity, and made it victorious in its chains. It crippled Dagon the Philistine's idol, 1 *Sam.* 5. 4, and made them return it to their disgrace, which they thought they had seized upon to their honour. While God is a strength to the poor, the *branch of the terrible shall be brought low,* and their blast be but as *a storm against a wall, Isa.* 25. 4, 5. He can hasten their ruin by their own subtlety, and catch them in their own net, *Psa.* 35. 8. Or, he can turn them to glorify the church, as much as they hindered her, *Isa.* 25. 3. They are sometimes compared to bees, *Psa.* 118. 12. *Isa.* 7. 18, and he can make them afford honey as well as a sting. They are bees for their wrath, and bees for their weakness, and many times bees for her profit. Sometimes he makes the house of Jacob as fire, and the house of Esau *as stubble before him, Obad.* 18. It is not more natural to the serpent's seed to spite the church, than it is natural to God to protect her; their malice cannot engage them so much in attempts against her, as God's promise engages him in the defence of her. What can weakness do against strength? folly against wisdom? Hell against heaven? and a fallen Lucifer against the highest God?

(4.) Here is comfort to expect *the glory of the church. The Highest himself shall establish her. The*

mountain of the Lord's house shall be lifted up on the top of the mountains, Isa. 2. 2. In the last days it shall be more glorious than any mountain dignified by God: above mount Sinai, where the law was given, the terrestrial mount Sion, where the temple was built, mount Moriah, where Abraham had a type of the death and resurrection of Christ, mount Horeb, where Moses by prayer discomfited Amalek, and mount Pisgah, where Moses had a prospect of Canaan. Abraham's conquest of the four kings, *Gen.* 14, seems to be a figure of the church's victories, when the captive Lots should be rescued, and Sodom itself be something better for Sion. Then shall Christ meet her as king of Salem, king of peace, with the blessings of the most high God. Then shall he, as he did at the feast in Cana, turn the water of the church into wine. *Idols shall be utterly abolished, Isa.* 2. 18. Dross and mixtures in doctrine and worship *purged out, Rev.* 22. 1. *The river of the water of life shall be as clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God, and of the Lamb. The everlasting gospel preached, Rev.* 14. 6, called everlasting, because it shall never more be clouded and obscured by the foolish inventions of men; there shall be no more sea, *Rev.* 21. 1.

The troubles of Sion, signified by a stormy sea, shall cease, and *a new heaven and a new earth*, be created; there shall be a multitude of conversions, *Rev.* 11. 15. *The kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Christ.* The breath of the Lord shall come into many, and make them *stand upon their feet, Ezek.* 37. 9, 10. There shall be a greater presence of God in ordinances, for the earth *shall shine with his glory, Ezek.* 43. 2. Holiness shall sparkle in her, for the *glory of the Lord shall be upon her, Rev.* 21. 11. His holiness to purify her, and his power to protect her. Persecutions without, and divisions within, shall cease; *Satan shall be bound*, his force restrained; he shall not wander about with

his cloven foot, *Rev.* 20. 3. The sea of glass, which was mingled with fire, with the fire of worldly persecutions, with the fire of intestine animosities, shall be as *clear as crystal*, *Rev.* 15. 2, and 22. 1. He will then have magistrates no longer carrying on the interest of the God of this world, but the interest of the church, whom he calls his princes, *Ezek.* 45. 8. His, because set up by a more immediate providence; his, because acting designedly and intentionally for his glory; no more pinching his people, and making a prey of his Sion, but laying down *their crowns at the foot of his throne.*

And to complete all, there shall be a perpetuity in this spiritual prosperity; only between the beginning and completing it Satan shall *be let loose:* but for a little season, *Rev.* 20. 3, and after this it shall not have one blow more from hell; but the devil must for ever give over nibbling at her heel. Now the church never yet found such a state suitable to those promises and predictions; some great thing remains to be accomplished which the world has not yet seen, nor the church experienced. But that truth that will not lie, that truth which cannot lie, has assured it. The *mystery of God shall be finished,* *Rev.* 10. 7. The church has hitherto been gasping in the fire, and in the water; she has lived, but as wrapped in a winding sheet; the saints under the altar have cried a long time for the vengeance of the temple to recompence their blood. There is a time when this Lazarus, that has lain begging at the door of the rich and mighty, shall be mounted up to a better state. Sion shall enjoy a resurrection, and fling off all badges of a funeral. *For the Highest himself shall establish her.*

Third use of *exhortation.*

(1.) Take heed of *apostatizing* from Sion; from the doctrine and worship of Sion.

If God shall establish her, stability is not to be

found out of her. To depart from her, is to leave a firm rock to find security in a quicksand. To leap out of a stout ship in a storm to expect a preservation in the waves. To turn our backs upon heaven, to seek ease in the bowels of hell. The altar at Damascus is cast down, and Jeroboam's altar is demolished when that at Jerusalem stood. To stay in Sion, is to be exposed to the gun-shot of men and devils: to run from her, is to seek to the devil for protection, and run into the mouth of all the artillery of God, that is set for the establishment of Sion. If we are christians, no force, nor violence should separate us from her.

2. Let us *love* Sion. There is nothing the scripture uses more as an argument to separate our affections from the world, than the uncertainty and fading nature of it. The perpetuity then of the church should be a motive to place our affections there, where they shall never want an object, and which we cannot love without loving her head and her establisher. The Jews in Babylon would rather forget themselves than their *city and temple*, *Psa.* 137. 5, 6. Our affections to gospel-Sion should be more tender, since God has poured out more of his Spirit upon her, and she is more amiable in his eye. That which the Jews so much affected, is perished. But the true Sion is eternal and shall flourish for ever. The highest himself hath an establishing affection to her. Let our affections to her equal the malice of the enemies against her, since we have greater incentives to love her than they can have to hate her. While others cry, *raze, raze it even to the ground*, let us at least testify our affections, and if we have not her standing walls to love, let us not estrange our tenderness from her *very dust*, *Psa.* 102. 14. There is a pleasure to be taken in her stones, because they shall be again set in their place, a favour to be shewn to her dust, because it shall be again

compacted, and enjoy a resurrection. For the highest that hath promised to establish her, will not desert her in her ruins; *When the Lord shall build up Sion he shall appear in glory, ver.* 16; we have therefore more ground to favour her dust than to admire the proudest palaces.

(3.) Let us *desire* the establishment of Sion more than our own private establishment.

It is the sign of a gracious Spirit to look *not only on his own things but the things of others, Phil.* 2. 4. And what things of others should be regarded, if the things of Christ and his spouse be overlooked. No private person has any promise of establishment but as he is a denizen of Sion, as one born in her. In desiring therefore the welfare of Sion, we wish and make way for the establishing of ourselves; our interests are common with hers. Her prosperity therefore should be the first and last of our wishes. When we wish the stability of Sion, we wish the honour of God, the continuance of his worship, the glorifying his name which is deposited in that cabinet; the glory of God cannot flourish, if the church perish. How base then are those, that if they can swim in a worldly prosperity, care not if the church be drowned in tears and blood; that clothe themselves, and regard not her nakedness; that provide an earthly Canaan for themselves, and care not what desolate desert Sion sits weeping in?

(4.) Let us *endeavour* the establishment of Sion. It is a grateful thing to a prince to favour his favourite. Let us be as forward to enlarge her territories, as the devil and his instruments are to increase the suburbs of hell. The Highest himself will establish her by himself; we must therefore take those methods which are agreeable to the chief preserver. A compliance with the enemies of God was never the way to secure the interest of Sion. A divine work in a divine way

will meet with divine assistance. To contribute to the establishment of Sion is a work honourable in itself, since it is the work of God himself; it is an imitation of the highest pattern. In this we are associates, and co-workers with God. For *the Highest himself shall establish Sion.*

END OF VOL. VIII.

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